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H. L. Myrick

ZFRM

THE

VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

EIGHT SERMONS

ON THE DOCTRINE OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT,

BY

CHARLES H. HALL, D.D.

At last I heard a Voice upon the slope
Cry to the summit, "Is there any hope?"
To which an answer pealed from that high land,
But in a tongue no man could understand:
And on the glimmering summit, far withdrawn,
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.

Tennyson.

Non parvum est, scire quod nescias.

Jerome.

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1878.

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DEDICATION.

FIRST, to every Christian man or woman, who has stood by the cold remains of relative or friend, and felt one doubt as to his acceptance with the Judge of all the earth; to such chiefly, with most earnest sympathy for them, and in hope that they may find some clue of consolation in these pages: next, to every soul that, by the prejudice of religious education, the torrent of surrounding opinions, or by misplaced confidence in the devices and learned disquisitions of even good men, is prompted to dark and gloomy thoughts of the Son of Mary, to doubt his own right to go to Him for sympathy and cleansing; and, lastly, to those whose sins cry out upon them, and whose hearts are filled with the pains of fear and remorse; with a prayer for them that they may learn that it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance, this little book is affectionately presented by the

AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

DURING the past winter the mind of the community of Brooklyn was suddenly and profoundly excited on the subject of the doctrine with which these discourses deal. The exciting causes were the sermon of the eloquent preacher of Plymouth Church, and the sermon about the same time of Dr. Farrar in Westminster Abbey in London. The author kept himself entirely aloof from any participation in the discussions which followed, and, after reading the two sermons when printed, kept silence, even from good words upon the subject, until, forced by a sense of duty to his own flock, he felt that he could not with a clear conscience refrain from a declaration of his own views.

Warned by the events which followed the publication of the two sermons, he asked of his congregation, to avoid any expression of opinion concerning his views, until they had heard him to the end. He would respectfully make the same request of the readers of this book. He is aware

of the defects of his presentation of the subject which will call for a charitable construction, and knows fully the meagerness and hurry which mark portions of his argument. He deplores the fact, that he is not able in eight discourses to deal at all reputably with a subject, which others decide peremptorily in one. There is hardly a point in the argument, which he would not gladly expand and improve, but must content himself with the hope, that if his views are of any value to others, they will suggest to them the proper lines of study and reflection.

He feels it due to himself to state, that he did not read a word of the many sermons which were kindly sent to him, until after he had put the last link in his own chain of argument: especially that, with the exception above made, he did not read a word of the writings of the author of the work on *Eternal Hope*. He does not, therefore, now remove from his own pages, what that impassioned author has said to the same effect. While these sermons have been on their way through the press, he has added here and there a brief note, for which he is indebted to Dr. Farrar.

These sermons make a broad issue with the common doctrines of hell and its endless torments. The reader will judge for himself, whe-

ther they give him anything restful and satisfactory in place of them. Some will resent them as false to the venerable teachings which claim the proud title of orthodox; and others, who have long lost all faith in the old, may discover that their doubts have grounds in reason and Scripture.

It is fair to state briefly, and in terms as unobjectionable as possible, what is conceived to be the common system which is faulted:

1. *Original sin.* Adam sinned against the Infinite. The sin was therefore infinite. It was infinite in vileness, in loss, and in guilt.

2. *Total depravity.* Adam transmitted this infinite sin to every one of his descendants. There is no division or diminution in the infinite. *There can be no degrees.* Every child of Adam inherits his infinite sin, loss, and guilt in all its absolute, total infiniteness.

3. *Atonement.* Only an Infinite Being can compass or cope with this original sin. Christ must be the Son of God to make the atonement for it. Only God can inaugurate the steps by which this infinity of good is made over to a sinner.

4. *Imputed righteousness.* No finite act of any sinner can come into comparison with his infinite depravity. Such act has only finite considera-

tions. The infiniteness of pardon is made over to the sinner from Christ, as a free donation, on motives known only to the Infinite. The "robe" of infinity is thrown over the sinner by Christ alone.

5. *The unconverted.* Without this benefaction every child of Adam is held by nature under the curse of total depravity, and the ban of infinite guilt. This applies to infants as much as to adults—as it is Adam's original act, which is the one cause of the guilt to all. The guilt of an infant is infinite—that of a Judas is infinite.

6. *Hell-torments.* They are the co-ordinate of this sense of *the infinite* in every man's inherited guilt. *They must be infinite in kind, degree, and duration.* It is the element of *the infinite* which alone clears this logic of any weakness. The distinction therefore of these torments into either (a) *material*—reaching the body as well as the soul —or (b) *immaterial*, those affecting the soul only, is utterly false and delusive. For they *must be infinite.* Infinite in kind—they must include every conceivable kind of punishment of infinite wrath directed by infinite ingenuity and power. They are not of the devil's creation; they are the devised penalty of Omniscient Goodness. If material fires can be supposed to distract the attention of the

soul a whit, and deaden remorse, then, that becomes an argument why the material fire is to be denied. But if "twin hells" can include any agony, which one alone would lack, then they must be accepted, for it is the element of *in*finity in kind which logic demands. They are infinite in degree —all picturings of horrible scenery can be only child's-play to the immeasurable reality. *Ex necessitate* they also must be infinite in duration. Absolute eternity of evil must be accepted as the consequence of the first idea of Adam's sin and Christ's atonement. No person holding the two terms as stated above of Original Sin and Total Depravity, can come to the discussion of the last term but in the spirit of a foregone conclusion. If in the punishment there is imagined the slightest alleviation of kind, degree, or duration, it detracts just so much from the Original Sin of Adam. But there can be no degree in the *infinite.* This is the system which claims to be *"teres, totus atque rotundus"*—and in a terrible sense it is so, beyond dispute.

Many readers will say to us: "I do not hold to that system." Probably not. Possibly very few can be found now to do it when stated in its nakedness. But this is the iron tower, which has been builded in the past, in whose adamantine safe is locked the key to this Bastile. This is the Gospel

which, as an eloquent Presbyterian divine of our country has said, "is like the light-house on a stern and rock-bound coast, intended by its Creator to light the way of the elect over the stormy ocean of life to the haven where they would be, while the rest of mankind, like the wild sea-birds, can only dash themselves against its cold, unfeeling walls, and perish in the waves." Calvin found the elements of it in the Augustinian doctrines, which, until his time, had been largely restrained and nullified by the powerful opposing influences of the Catholic Church, and he set them up in their nakedness, without those restraining influences, and bound them into coherency with the Titan forces of his logic. It, at one time, prevailed in England, and was passed over to this land, to receive new forces from Jonathan Edwards, Hopkins, and Emmons, and others of that class. It taught Dr. Emmons to say,* "the happiness of the elect will in part consist in watching the torments of the damned, and among them of their own children and dearest friends, and yet they will sing Hallelujah." It sent the warm blood flowing in the heart of Dr. Spring in gratitude at "the glory, when He, who hung on Calvary, shall cast those

* See letter of Miss C. E. Beecher, in the *Tribune* of March 9, 1878.

who have trodden His blood under their feet, into a furnace of fire." It prompted Dr. Edwards to ask of sinners: "You cannot stand an instant before an infuriated tiger; what then will you do, when God rushes against you in all his wrath?" It is to-day the real substructure of the common dogma.

Possibly few persons dare now go the lengths of the old-time logic—who yet hold to the dogma of hell in all its fierceness and intolerableness. The worse for them. It was this logic which gave it an excuse. We pardon at last the Spanish inquisitor of the days of Philip II., who was only acting according to the spirit of his age; but we should regard him to-day in our own land, as little removed from something worse than a tiger. One entertains respect for the system, when it had power to command the unquestioning faith of men, in all its great salient points. But, now, if a man informs us, that he is not influenced by the precedent logic, and that he shrinks from the presentment of the real points which made the system respectable, but holds to the worst and most hateful of them all, we fail to find his position honorable. It is much as if one should still insist on putting men to the rack and burning them at the stake, while confessing that he saw no reason for it.

Those older men were terribly in earnest in all things—as terribly so in this dogma of hell. We are not. Our thrills and exhortations are dramatic and speculative. For one the author feels compelled to protest against the whole system from its first postulate to the last. The only earnestness which he feels able to claim, is in the two assertions which, like lines of rock, seem to him to run along above the dark fogs of limitless thought on this subject, and to inclose the Valley of the Shadow between them—*one*, that the judgment of the Saviour of men will always be final, thorough, and just: *the other*, that in its absolute or philosophical sense, *evil cannot be eternal.* Other and better eyes may penetrate this outer darkness, and see through to the bottom of this Valley. May Christ keep us all, gentle reader, from other than speculative knowledge of what may be there.

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I.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

LUKE, xii. 5.—But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, *Fear him.**

IT is our first duty to do justice to the idea which is presented in this text. After we have seen and appreciated just what it says, we can properly raise the general question of the place to which it refers. It appears from the passage, that a multitude was gathered together around Christ, the new prophet of Galilee, insomuch that they trode one upon another: it is also evident that they were an excited crowd. The motive of active fear of the opinions and the possible violences of what we call *the world*, came naturally to the surface. It is plain that the teacher of the few unknown disciples, took the opportunity to impress on their minds the two contrasted fears of men—one, the fear of men in

* Preached in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Brooklyn, February 10, 1878.

the majority, men in authority, men hardened by prejudice, men established in places of power and able to disgrace and destroy innovators and reformers; and the other, the fear of the unseen, far-off Being, who often seems to work slowly, silently, and after much patient delay.

The disciples of Christ were amazed, beyond doubt, at the exceeding rashness of their Teacher, as he puts himself in uncompromising opposition to the rulers who were then sitting in Moses' seat. "Woe unto you, Scribes, Pharisees, Lawyers, hypocrites!" He seemed to be rushing headlong on his own destruction.* His awful denunciations of their old and reputable Rabbis, the Scribes, and Pharisees, which were so unlike his usual gentle and charitable spirit, made them tremble for his safety. Men had been hurried to death in Jerusalem for language far less offensive than that which he had just used. It was only because his very violence had swept the venerable hypocrites before him, that they did not raise the cry of blasphemy, and hurry him outside the city walls and stone him to death for his crime.

* "And as he said these things, the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak many things, laying in wait for him and seeking to catch something out of his mouth that they might accuse him."—*Luke*, xi. 53, 54.

Hence the great, or as the writer has it, "the innumerable multitude of people," in their excitement treading on each other, surging hither and thither with varying emotions, were astonished as they listened to the bold, the unexpected, and terrible language of this extraordinary gage of defiance flung down before the rulers by the Prophet of Galilee. It is just on this critical balancing-crest of the wave, that we are obliged to look at the Son of man in the text. It is just here that he rings out the contrast of the fear of mankind; the fear of the world in all its varieties, fear of mobs, of tyrants, Annases, Neros, Domitians, fear of opinions, hates, sneers, any and all of them, shaded off as they run through the gamut of the passions on the one side—and that side then frightfully present in the lowering looks of the angry Pharisees whose ears are tingling and stinging with the woes which he had just spoken against them. The cover of this fear is hypocrisy, in all its shapes, from the open lie and intentional deceit, to the gentle, polite shadings of policy, of prudent silences, of half-and-half opinions, and generalizations that may mean this or that, as you give them varying emphasis. Now, says the Master in effect, "I mean to drive you and all my disciples out of all this courteous sheltering and

hiding of the great thoughts which I leave with you. There is nothing of any purpose about me and my Gospel which is covered that shall not be revealed; nothing hid, that shall not be made known. Things spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light. Things whispered in the secrecy of the closets shall be proclaimed as by a loud-shouting herald upon the house-tops." All other truth, like salt that had lost its savor and become inert, might lie in philosophic serenity in the writings of the wise of this world. There was to be a *livingness* in all teachings and thinkings of the Christian which belonged properly to him as a Christian, which, like salt, must act and must repel corruption—and therefore could not in its own nature be concealed; could not escape the hostility of the evil world. No ship of war was ever more evidently cleared for action than this. The disciples must have wondered and trembled at his strangeness, his novel exhibition of rashness, if they did not in their hearts think it *violence* of spirit. Men sometimes talk of Jesus as having been all-filled with the soft enthusiasms of human gentleness. I tell you that there was something more than that in him. He often betrays the consciousness that he came to send "not peace, but a sword." These words of his in

the text are responsible for all they have done since. They have armed men in steel. They have sharpened their swords, and sent them on fatal crusades. They have soothed the dying martyr at the stake, as his hot breath fled along the only temporary hell that the wrath of men could kindle here on earth, to rise on the wings of this contrast and see far down below him forever the flames of the lurid abysses from which he was rescued by his faith in them. I remind you that Christ also appeared to one of those men, as the terrible Leader of armies, as a rider on a white horse, a warrior clothed in armor, and with vesture dipped in blood, and on his thigh his name written, *Lord of lords, and King of kings.* It is philosophically required of the Nicene faith, that the Son of God should have in himself whatever answers to all that is in God. A Socinian's model teacher may be all a pastoral shepherd, but not the Christ of the Church. The wrath of nature at all sinners against her laws, and the thunders of Sinai which really echoed that idea, must meet in him who took the title of *Emmanuel*, or *God-with-us.* As "God of God, and Light of Light," he must have in him the hot fire-blasts of Sodom's tragedy and the thunder-tones of Sinai's crags, as well as the pastoral simplicity of the

Nazarene peasant, and the uncomplaining meekness of the Sufferer of the Via Dolorosa. He, who is at last to judge the world in righteousness, must then be seen to justify his own language, for all his servants who have been battling with the rage of evil men, in the faith of these words of the text.

Now, it is in contrast to this most real and terrible of human fears, the fear of death by violence and tyranny, that Jesus introduces the text. If one can believe that Christ opposes a fact with a fancy; a real, dark tide of bloody persecutions, dragonnades, Smithfield fires, and massacres of St. Bartholomew, with a dream of semi-Persian and Israelitish philosophy, then he must square his respect for his model with his sense of religious consistency as he can. I leave him to do it at his leisure.

Believing in the Nicene faith, I hear Christ here saying: "But I, who deliberately cast you out on this crisis, forbidding you to be politic and soft in combating the sins of men, or wise after the shrewd examples of other teachers, I forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him whose hands hold the key of the bottomless pit, whose power really begins to be felt when your life is ended." Now take the thought of hell out of the Christian reve-

lation altogether, and where do you leave all that noble army of martyrs, who have chosen to fear it more than the wrath of men? I am not now denying room for some awful questionings along the whole line of the subject. I think that religious quacks have been treating men with a frightful sort of heroic treatment, as the physicians call it, and that the excitement in the public mind on this theme, which is now existing around us, is in part due to their previous mistakes. Our religious divisions incline many ignorant preachers to resort to all manner of stimulations in commending their own side of sectarian questions, till men are right in the suspicion that these quackeries are really misrepresenting the religion of the Son of Mary. They certainly do, in my judgment. But the remedy is not to be found in indiscriminate denials of truths which are really found in the Bible, nor in any new discoveries of the faith which was once delivered to the saints, which this age is about to make. Drop the Gospel, if you will, in order to escape from the fear of future punishment. Science will take her own revenge on the world for its skepticism, and tell you with one common voice the absolute irreversibleness of law, and the certainty of inevitable penal compensations. With her, one voice rings through all her chambers:

"That thing that sinneth, it shall die." The same law holds in the realm of souls. Nature has need always for a future judgment. There is something more than poetry in the language of the Psalms, which says: "Let the sea roar and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity." * Nature demands it; and nature, too, claims a share in the interpretation of it. The place of punishment is not to be defined arbitrarily, by theologians or mere word-critics only. It must answer in some intelligible way to needs which are universally confessed.

I am not about to tell you anything new on the subject of this place of final punishment.

The word hell, *as a place of final punishment*, occurs for the first time in the Sermon on the Mount. It is not found in the Old Testament. I do not mean to say by this that the idea of future punishment is not there. It is plain to my mind that the famous Bishop Warburton has demonstrated, in his famous work, called the *Divine Legation of Moses*, that there was no religious system of an-

* Ps. xcviii. 7–9.

cient times which amounted to anything, which did not base its power on the sanctions of future rewards and punishments, excepting alone that of Moses.* The polity of Moses proceeded on the thought of God as being always present in it to make good his own laws. It was exceptional. On this fact he claims that it was of divine origin. Again the instinct of a future world as necessary to set right the discords of this life has been sufficiently exhibited by Bishop Butler in his famous work, *The Analogy of Religion.* In the Old Testament we find these two ideas existing beneath the surface. The one, in the often-recurring premonition of a judgment to come; the other, in the look of anticipation which belongs to the whole volume of the Old Testament. But the word *hell,*

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* Bishop Warburton, for whose eccentricities or temper I do not choose to be held responsible, has laid down "three very clear and simple propositions," which suffice my immediate purpose.

1. That to inculcate the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments is necessary to the well-being of society.

2. That all mankind, especially the most wise and learned nations of antiquity, have concurred in believing and teaching that this doctrine was of such use to society.

3. *That the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments is not to be found in, nor did it make part of the Mosaic Dispensation.*

On this last proposition he founds his argument, that "the Jewish Religion and Society were supported *by an extraordinary Providence.*"

as a place of punishment, is not in the Hebrew Bible.* Our translators have confused the thought by confusing the words as they have done. When, for instance, it says: "The wicked shall be turned into *hell*, and all the nations that forget God," † it is the same word which David uses of himself, when he hopes that his own soul shall not be left in hell.‡ These same words are cited in the New Testament, as being true of the soul of Christ; and as proving beyond dispute that the resurrection was really anticipated in this preparatory manner in the Old Testament. In that book, the Hebrew word *Sheol* is equivalent to the word *Hades* of the Greeks, though with some differences. It signifies merely a place of departed spirits, and is so used in the Creed of the Church Catholic to-day. The Hebrews, as all the ancients,

* "In the canonical books of the Old Dispensation there is not a single genuine text, claiming to come from God, which teaches explicitly any doctrine whatever of a life beyond the grave. That doctrine, as it existed among the Jews, was no part of their pure religion, but was a part of their philosophy. It did not, as they held it, imply anything like our present idea of the immortality of the soul, reaping in the spiritual world what it has sowed in the physical. It simply declared the existence of human ghosts amidst unbroken gloom and stillness in the cavernous depths of the earth, without reward, *without punishment*, without employment, scarcely with consciousness."—*Alger*, Doct. of Future Life, p. 151.

† Ps. ix. 17.

‡ Ps. xvi. 10.

thought vaguely of a vast and dark *under-grave*, a cavern beneath the surface of the ground, into which all souls went at death. It was dark, sepulchral, shadowy. They did not define its divisions till very late in their history. Indeed it is not quite in keeping with the Oriental imagination to require any such definitions. It was more the taste of the Greeks * to create them. They had mapped it off in their mythology and poetry, and had run the streams of Tartarus, Cocytus and Pyriphlegethon through its misty shades. The later Jews seem to have imitated them in this profane picturing. I shall claim in its place that this partial silence is a sacred æsthetic. The subject is still in half-shadow. Before we have done with the present excitement of the community on the subject, the evils of its unskillful handling will be likely to prove the same.

The history of this word *Gehenna*, which is used in the text, and which comes into the light for the first time in the mouth of Christ, and, of all other places, appears first in the solemn Sermon on the Mount, is very remarkable. On the southeast side

* Originally Hades was a demi-god, and is so invariably in Homer. The name was afterward transferred to his abode or kingdom, and became the equivalent of the lower world of all souls. This idea of Hades as a monstrous being crept into the Jewish thought.—See Smith's Dict.

of the Temple of the Jews, the valley of Jehoshaphat sinks down rapidly, into the deep wady or ravine, which drains the whole water-shed of the city of Jerusalem. This ravine turns first to the south and then to the east, and finally ends in the sullen level of the Dead Sea. Just south of the Temple, it forms a deep gorge, and at some early date it took the name of its first owners. This name in Greek was, *Ge-Ben-Hinnom*, or the land of the sons of Hinnom. It became shortened into Ge-Hinnom, and finally into *Gehenna*. It is Christ's word for hell. Its history was such, that I fancy the blood ran cold as the eloquent tongue of the Gallilean prophet first uttered it in connection with the fate of sinners beyond the grave. There, in a watered valley, in the palmy days of the city, was located the king's garden or park. Solomon, the first of scientific botanists, who knew every plant "from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," indulged his tastes in beautifying the spot. There he sought to realize the dreams which beset us all, of an Eden, a "garden of the Lord," and there as of old he found the fatal temptation of his passions, and fell into grievous sins. He sacrificed in it to the idols of his heathen wives, and corrupted himself and

them by the orgies which attended the foul worship of all the surrounding nations. Later on in history, the valley became the seat of that most abominable of all obscene worships, that of the horrid idol *Moloch.* There Natural Religion, which some so much admire, worked out its own oft-repeated story. There men and women who had outraged all the finer pieties of the Mosaic system, and fled from Shiloah, that "went softly," at last found themselves sacrificing their sons and daughters unto this horrible revenge of the guilty conscience. The innocent babes of these sinners against nature and the law of Moses, were cast into the arms of a huge, brazen image which was heated to a furious heat, and were burned up. One touch of nature rises out of the terrible tale of the national corruption connected with the place. They sought to drown the screams of the children with the noise of drums, beat by burly priests, who themselves deserved to have been sent on this same fiery path to eternity. So the place took the name of *Tophet*, or "the place of drums."

In due time came the reaction. Lies, thank God! cannot live forever. The pious reformer Josiah put a stop to the accursed butchery, and to make the curse effectual, he fought one super-

stition with another. He wisely made the spot so polluted, that no man ever dared afterward to attempt either to live in or to ask any respectable foreign god to enter it. He caused all the dead bodies which were found around the city to be cast into the valley, and emptied all the offal of the town into its gloomy, fiend-haunted depths. He did his work effectually. He killed out that superstition effectually and finally in that spot. But in time a new trouble arose. The strong, hot *samiel* winds from scorching sands of the south, were found to bring up the stench and malaria of the field into the city, and to defile and poison the very courts of the Temple of the Lord. So they lit fires there, and in the time of Christ, these fires were almost continual. They were "never quenched," but burned on day and night. You have the lively picture of this fact, in a passage of the Revelation of St. John, as he represents the saints of the New Jerusalem, looking off from the porches of the city which is now the Church of Christ, and seeing the smoke of the torment of the wicked ascending up forever.* You have it again in the words of Christ, as he speaks of "the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched." On the whole it is not

* Rev. xix. 3; xiv. 11.

too much to say, that of all the types and symbols of that strange place and people, which have been invented by prophets, psalmists, and poets, there is no one to compete in clearness of representation with this name used of it by Christ. It had been lying there as a foul, horrible nightmare, as a part of that city life, its word unspoken, till it came up to be heard once and never again forgotten, in the Sermon on the Mount.

It is probable that the dreams of men and women, that night, after they heard this new use of the word, were scared with terrors, as this nightmare bestrode them and uttered its horrific sounds, of undying worms and quenchless flames, and all for the good of their chief city: all for the health of its inhabitants. Put out the fires! The foul poison will creep up the sacred hill, and invade the very presence of the God of Israel. Stop the undying worm! It was inserted into the very frame of nature, when the first fern grew in the mists and fogs of old eternities as a law, that the bad must always die and change into other forms, in order that the endless cycles of created life may go on, and the world be found "very good" by its Creator and his children. This one word *Gehenna*, spoken simply—for you will notice that Jesus gives no special emphasis to it,

as at all peculiar—but once spoken, has of itself modified the history of the world from the time of that one utterance.

It is perfectly true that some have made too much of it, and that thousands miss its meaning. It is plain to my mind that some of the inferences which have been drawn from it by Christian priests and preachers are simply atrocious, if not wicked. That does not touch the matter at stake. It is all the more a frightful word for that quiet utterance. You cannot attribute it to some wild enthusiasm of the sinner David; you cannot insinuate that it began to be in the unhallowed revengefulness of some suffering, half-sanctified prophet. It did not start up into notice in the rich imagery of the patriotic Isaiah, nor give a deeper shadow to the lamentations of mournful Jeremy. In all their denunciations of the Gentiles, their detestations of monstrous tyrants or idolaters, they had never thought of giving their feelings vent by such a word. It came first from the *Son of Man.* It came from him in the quietest and serenest of his teachings; in that one of them all, when he was engaged with passionless principles and universal truths; in truths of which he says: "if ye do these things, ye build on the rock." Men cannot change much about it. It is like the

statue of the Moses of Michael Angelo, passionless and awful. Its peculiarities are arguments of its truth. Once seen, and there is no need of any, or certainly of many words about it. Some ages may think to pile up imaginary shades of horror about it. Dante, when he sought to do it, in accord with the mediæval temper, was compelled to go outside of the Bible for all his blacker colors. Priests have gathered about it sulphurous fumes of far-fetched dogma, and crowded its supernatural terrors with impossible and inconceivable qualities till it stands in the sermons of some preachers to-day like a monstrous Kilauea,* upon the crust of whose crater you stand and look down a thousand feet below into miles and miles of living lava-fires.† But to me that is all pure human weakness, offering, like Uzza of old,

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* *Kilauea*, a volcano of Hawaii, of eight miles circumference of living fire. There is a spot in the melted lava which is in constant ebullition, which the natives called Hale-mau-mau, or "House of Everlasting Fire," and regarded as the residence of the goddess Pele. An eruption of this volcano surpasses all that Dante dreamed or Milton conjured—pouring out 15,400,000,000 cubic feet of lava—and in 1840 ending its work forty miles from where it began it.

† Hear one of the popular preachers on this theme, and fancy him standing on Kilauea: "When thou diest, thy soul will be tormented alone; that will be a hell for it: but at the day of judgment thy body will join thy soul, and then thou wilt have twin-hells, thy soul sweating drops of blood, and thy body suffused

to hold up the Ark of God when the oxen stumbled. There is many a spot in the history of this dark vale which might be marked with statues of Perrez-Uzza, where men have lost sight of God's light in their presumption. Would you know what a Christian reader of Scripture believes, concerning future punishment from the word of God? You have this word, *Gehenna*, standing in the very center of the noblest of Christ's discourses—given to the world by him—not intrusted to any inferior servant. You may look off in imagination from the walls of the very temple which typifies the New Jerusalem, and see the dark wavy spiral of smoke that tells you of the holiest "law of selection" that science knows. Accept the fact, *and then do not go beyond it.* Drop from it all additions which later men have made, and consider whether it is safe or possible for any man to lose his fear of that Being—who out of Christ is a consuming fire—when in Christ, he has given us the remarkable revelation. I shall reject many things which have been added to this thought of Gehenna by uninspired men, but I shall do it, be-

with agony. In fire exactly like that we have on earth thy body will lie, asbestos-like, forever unconsumed, all thy veins roads for the feet of pain to travel on, every nerve a string on which the devil shall forever play his diabolical tune of Hell's Unutterable Lament."—*Spurgeon*, Sermon on the Resurrection of the Dead.

lieving that no salutary force of fear, and no policy of morals in presenting truth can equal in force and wisdom, the real facts concerning this place, as Christ, once for all, gave them to the Church.

I stop here, with no inference of my own to offer you to-day, and with a single warning: this excitement on this question of the future abodes for the lost indicates an under-current of life here in these cities which is often seen coming to the surface. There is a *drift* in our metropolitan society, and the end is not yet. Before earthquakes, springs often dry up or they are seen to rush up turbidly in strange spots; it is the same in nations and in churches. Thus the French Revolution, and many another social outbreak has been heralded by a previous general amnesty and promises of a rose-colored millennium. Sodom was "like the garden of the Lord" twenty-four hours before the storm of God's wrath came. Similar signs now loom up, the same dangers beset us. What is God's truth in this matter will live on independent of our fancies. What is our disease here, and our exaggeration, and pragmatical impertinence which takes this oft-repeated diagnosis, it may be well for us to contemplate. Let us search the word of God for what it truly says, and learn and know from it whom, and what to fear.

II.

THE WORD GEHENNA.*

ST. MATTHEW, v. 22.—But whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.

I CALL your attention in the first place, to the peculiar manner in which this word comes to the surface of the scriptural record. It is not in the effort to impress a horrid crime, and create a sensation of its brutality or its intrinsic guiltiness. If it had been, we might think of the speaker as unconsciously influenced by the natural excitement of a sacred indignation. It would be natural. If Jesus had been describing at the time some monster of iniquity, like Judas, or Annas, or Nero; if he had been stirred by the anticipation of scenes of blood and horror, say of such as afterward occurred in the Roman amphitheaters, and had given vent to the grief of his soul, in this word, we should expect it. The passion would explain it; but the Master is at his quietest. He

* Preached in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Brooklyn, February 10, 1878.

is sitting on a sunny hill-top. He is surrounded with simple people. He is discoursing of the land of Beulah, and the still waters, where the Shepherd of Israel was to lead his flock. He is both as pastoral and as serene as he is ever described. He is too, just telling them of that wonder of the new system, which he was to introduce, *the love*—the brother-thought, which was to separate him and his Gospel from all other teachers and gospels to the end of time. Blessings, like pearls, are dropping from his lips. He is in the gentlest of possible moods. He is also in the spring-time, the hey-day of his work; no one has yet withstood him and rudely ruffled him; no bigoted priest or low-browed scribe has yet cast his shadow across his path. He is about to tell the peasants around him of that Divine Charity, for which he has received the plaudits of even infidels and misbelievers, and this is the way he does it: "But I say unto you [in contrast to that old literal law written on the stone] that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the Judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, *Raca*, shall be in danger of the Council: but whosoever shall say, *Thou fool*, shall be in danger of hell-fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and

there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." I pass by just now the side questions which suggest themselves in the use of this Oriental language, for that one thought which is to my purpose. Jesus is here exalting *charity* by the homeliest of applications to its due place in contrast to formal religion. God, as he tells us, is willing to wait for sacrifices rather than for fair conduct to a wronged fellow-man. Directly in the center of this first promulgation of the divinest charity that ever has fallen from the lips of man, he has entwined and entangled this revelation of the sinner's hell. Did he then foresee, that the temptation would always be felt, to attack the theory of future punishment on the platform of his mercifulness? He has certainly so bound the two things up into one bundle, that no man can ever cut the knot that holds them together. He must either contradict Christ, or despise him, to get away from these words.

The real question before this community just now is, *Is God so merciful that he will wipe out the idea of hell from his revelation?* What are we to do, ask eloquent preachers, with the myriads,

who deserve in our estimation only some gentler sort of purgatory; who are open to some penalty, but whom we are unable to look upon as among the lost? It is a humanitarian plea. If it were not for the manner in which the revelation of the punishments of the future are recorded, the objection would possibly prevail with most men. But it is, in my judgment, impossible to separate the idea, and change its relations much from what the Church has decided of them ages ago. She takes the words of Scripture, with all the lights which she can have, and offers to guide us by them, and leaves all such perplexities to the Judge of all the earth. There is nothing new in the flurry that has been sprung upon us. It is the same world-old trouble on the question of "why evil exists at all." We have been drifting with the tide, and one and another have found suddenly, that the maxims which have been followed at hazard are unsound. If we look at the Church, we will find, that she has no need to change her thoughts, and we no occasion of a moment's worry as to the sounder decisions upon it. It is certain enough that the discussion which has been started will do apparent and temporary injury. It will help to disintegrate the popular systems of religion; and the first results of such disintegration

must be injurious to individuals, just as a war disturbs a land and destroys multitudes of individual soldiers. In all men of the baser sort, who have been held in some order by their fears, the injury will be great and inconvenient. If you remove the fears of such men, the danger of riot possibly increases in them. They only know enough of the discussion to remember, that eminent Bible scholars have expressed some doubts as to the exact lines of thought in regard to this subject. They do not trouble themselves to know that there is the same substantial agreement on the main point of the sufficiency of the final punishment that there has always been. The questions which have been raised, I will examine at another time. I present at this time the main point only: —that hell, or a place of future punishment, is a fact of the gospels, and is so received by this Church.

As I have said before, it comes to the surface, in this text, for the first time. The Rev. John Keble, poet and divine, has well said what has been often said before and since in prose:

> "The Fount of Love
> His servants sends to tell love's deeds,
> Himself reveals the sinner's hell."

If this is so, it manifests a dread, a silence, a pro-

found solemnity in the subject, as it lies in the Bible, which has been miserably lost sight of. This is one of the bolts which has been stored away, in the secret arsenal of the Being who moved over the sacred page, to be revealed only when the plan of his redemption was at last fully displayed. Not one of the rewards and punishments of the Pentateuch, in terms, looks beyond this life. I say *in terms*. The Israelites had their own thoughts of the instinctive and universal fears of another world, into which the immortal soul passed after death. They had that much by nature; and there was no need to emphasize it in revelation. If men could banish the darker side of this thought of necessary punishment from the Church, it would come back again of itself. It is a disease of the human imagination, which the Gospel regulates and confines to limits. Long before Moses, the fierce priests of Egypt summoned even the dead bodies of kings into their court, and mimicked the trial which all men believed to take place, in the gloomy shades of the vast under-ground. Orcus, Rhadamanthus, and Pluto are instinctive creations of the imaginations of wicked men. If the good men of the world could destroy the doctrine of future punishment, the bad would become its apostles and howl its

awfulness on the common ear. It is the part of the Great Physician to proclaim the fact of it, and then leave it balanced against his rich promises of grace, so as to make his tenderness most apparent in it all. It is, as we would say, original with him, as it stands in the New Testament. *It is Christ's treatment of it, to which I call your attention, now.*

The word *Gehenna* or hell occurs *twelve times* in the New Testament. Once St. Peter, speaking of lost spirits, uses the word *Tartarosas*, or the bringing them down to Tartarus.* This is put in the English Bible as *hell.* But it is the Greek classic story alone which tells us what the word means. Does any Bible reader believe in the mythology of Homer? So that the word *hell* as a place of punishment in the severe sense, is used

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* 2 Pet. ii. 4. This word "does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, nor in the Septuagint, therefore the meaning must be sought for from other sources, from Homer, Hesiod, and Plato."—*Bengel.* "Σειραῖς ζόφου ταρταρώσας is an expression truly Æschylean, in which ταρτ. is derived from the Heathen, and σειραῖς ζόφου from the Jewish mythology: the Tartarus being a part of Hades in which criminals were supposed to be confined till the day of judgment. Now they are not represented as being in actual torments, but only *adjudged* to them, and in the meantime committed to the security of chains of darkness, *i. e.*, to places where darkness holds them as it were enchained."—*Dr. Bloomfield.* The word should not have been translated *hell.* It is of pagan origin and is to be construed as the poetry of mythology.

but twelve times in the whole Bible. "Ah!" says some one, "that takes something from its authority." Let us look at that point for a moment. It is only necessary, for a sentence of death against a criminal to be signed once. No man expects it to be placarded on the fences at every corner. If the fact is once clearly told, it is enough. That it is not hurled indiscriminately at every sin and every sinner, is another thing about it that is to be considered in its place.

On one occasion St. James, speaking of an evil and malicious tongue, says metaphorically, "it sets on fire the course (or *wheel*, margin) of nature, and it is set on fire of hell" (Gehenna). This seems to me one of the most perilous hyperboles in the Bible: but it is one, and puts the makebate and slanderer in the catalogue of devils, with a vengeance. It is passionate exaggeration.

Besides these two instances of the use of the apostles, our Lord used the word on four occasions: and *only he has used it.* That is, of the twelve times that it is used, Christ is the only one in the Bible who uses it directly of the future state of the souls of men, after the day of judgment. So much then for the idea that it is foreign to his gentler nature, and a thing of previous barbarism. Two things then cannot be

hidden; one, that this word—*Gehenna*—was Christ's word, and was avoided by the New Testament writers. They left it with him. The other is, that Christ has involved the thought in the center of his most merciful doctrines, so that you cannot tear it again out without destroying the force of the most precious ideas of the Gospel. Let us look at the several instances of this use of it, for that must be the sole test at last of the idea of Christ.

He used the word on four occasions. He presents it in connection with five great ideas.

I. In the Sermon on the Mount, and there he uses it in uttering two thoughts. One of them is in the text. The thought here is, that if the two things at any time come into comparison, then the love of our fellow-man and regard for his rights are always paramount. You may leave your gift at the altar, till you get back, and God will condone the fault. But he will not forgive deadness to the law of the brotherhood. He who calls his brother, *fool*, is in danger of Gehenna.

II. Again, speaking of lust,* he says: "It is better to cut off a right hand or to pluck out a right eye than to go into hell," a sound body with a rotten heart. Who doubts it?

* St. Matt. v. 29, 30.

III. Again,* he tells us a grand truth, and gives a very war-trumpet alarum, as he is seen shouting to his warriors all along the course of history: "Fear not them who kill the body, but only Him who has power to cast both soul and body into hell." It has been the very nerve-principle of the world's reformation. It has been the strength of martyrs all along. It has lifted the fear of God to its right place in the minds of all men, and shed a divine light on the history of the Church.

IV. Again in St. Matthew, xviii. 9, and St. Mark, ix. 43, 45, and 47, he repeats himself, in comparing the lowly condition of his followers with the pride of worldly men: "Woe unto the world because of offenses, for they must come; but you, my disciples, never forget that it is better to suffer the loss of anything here below, though it be a hand, a foot, or an eye, rather than compromise the conscience. It is better to enter into life blind, if such a thing could be imagined, or halting on one leg, than by a cowardly escape from painful duty here, to go into hell with all the limbs perfect." Now thus far, let me note that he is using the fact of final punishment as a kind father, to warn his own children. He is not speaking to those who are outside of his own family.

* St. Matt. x. 28, and St. Luke, xii. 5.

Thus far he is using the word indirectly, and not directly. He is taking it for granted, as something which was known to his hearers. What was known to them was not our own modern ideas, but the valley of Hinnom, to the south of the Temple, as a metaphor for a valley somewhere near the spiritual temple which was to come. Thus far his use of the fact is altogether different from its common treatment now.

V. But in the last instance of the word, its darker shade comes into view. He is speaking there to the hardened reprobates of earth, who were then represented by the unfortunate and guilty, but most religious Pharisees, and he denounces them in the severest manner, if possible to break through the crust of their self-delusions.* "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves! Ye serpents! ye generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" The word *damnation* has gathered a stain from our present coarser habits of speech, which it had not when it was thus translated by Tyndale. At all events, the original

* St. Matt. xxiii. 15 and 33.

means simply *condemnation.** It is not the intention of the Saviour to pile terror on two words, where one is sufficient. In the first of these last two sentences, the being *a twofold child of hell* is of course an hyperbole, and must be taken metaphorically and not directly. Taken as prose, it meant directly that the proselytes who were laboriously made by the Pharisees, had a double right to be considered reprobates—one by denying their original natural religion, or by the consequences of such religions; the other, by becoming as hard and hypocritical as their teachers. In the last sentence the words are an impassioned question, and leave something to a charitable doubt as to the answer.

Let me interpose here, that I am not forgetting that I am only looking at a word, and that there are other words that come into the question, such as "the wrath of God," "everlasting fire," "the second death," "the bottomless pit," "the eternal punishment," and others; and that these may modify our conclusions. Let it be granted, for the present. We cannot, however, get at any proper conclusion by rambling off into side questions.

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* Κρίσις—judgment. "The verb 'to damn' and its cognates does not once occur in the Old Testament. No word conveying any such meaning occurs in the Greek of the New Testament."—*Dr. Farrar's* Eternal Hope, p. xxix.

Our method in this discussion, as in all things, must be to leave such things to take care of themselves, till we find some sure ground on which to stand. I am conscious of differing very painfully from many sectarian teachers, who suppose themselves to be in the inner shrine of the secrets of the Scriptures as to Gospel doctrines. I therefore deliberately take my stand on the above words of the Master himself, and try to square all other answers to them, and not them to others. I take his words in these two discourses in the strongest meaning which they can bear by the rules of honest language, that I may the more carefully exclude from them the inferences of later ages. I hold that he first of all revealed the meaning which is found in the word *Gehenna*, and that he closed the revelation of it. All else is in my judgment the inference, of inspired or uninspired men, from his language.

The point from which the present *drift* of the Church began, is, after all, far inside of and behind this one question, on the methods of interpretation of the Scriptures. This discussion has its roots in deeper issues of the questions of inspiration, and will be at last decided by most men, on the results of those other perplexities.

First, then, Christ used that word, taken from

the most foul and horrid thing around Jerusalem, the *Valley of Hinnom*, where lust and passion, and sensuality and murder, had outraged all natural limits; where again nature had scourged the victims of lust to dark and fatal deeds of blood; where shrieking mothers and brutal priests had made the orgies of a filthy idolatry too terrific to be dwelt on: where that happened which happens in all God's world, and men accept it as the tribute to the fiat that he made it "very good," and that the lawless, and the base, and corrupt do well *to die;* that the worm, in his way, is an angel of God, and not of the devil; that he gnaws at corruption, and helps to remove it out of sight, and send it on its course again to try once more a newer life in other forms; and that the pure fire is noble and blest that it eats it up and removes the evil of its dying, and keeps the atmosphere clear for those who love God: I say that he takes that word, *Gehenna*, and casts it into his system of divinest thought, and warns us by it of the horrors of lawlessness, and baseness, and corruption. I will go just as far as he did; and so help me God, I will go no step farther. What is clear, I accept dogmatically as clear. What is cast into gentler *half-shadows*, and is left unsaid—left to the instinctive fears of mankind, I will accept as shadowy

and as better not defined. Take away all human inferences and all system-scaffolding, and the rest is God's truth. Let us learn to become satisfied with only that. It is clear enough, that Christ has told us of a dark gorge outside the city walls, where Judas bought a place of his own with blood-money, that burnt his hands, and where he lies in "his own place," a wretched suicide; where in the tireless work of good that rules in all things, the worm never dies, while the corruption is there to be removed; where the fires are never quenched while empoisoning filthiness remains to be burned up, but continue always working to remove out of being whatever can offend. Is it real fire? Is it eternal? Is it the dual theme of every Gospel sermon? I will speak on these questions in their places.

I leave with you another fact about this word. How seldom is it spoken of. How singular was the delicacy of St. Peter, and St. Paul, and the rest of the Scripture writers, that they would not adopt it; that one of them went to pagan mythology for his word when he needed it, rather than touch this one which Christ had used. Was it something which they could not understand, the law of nature, that the worm and the fire are, in their way, *good things?* That as they wrought for

blessing in the Jew-city, so, somehow, they were to work always for the weal of the spiritual city? Or was there a grand delicacy in them, which we have lost sight of? that the word belonged to the Son of God alone? that only he who should in pity judge mankind could really comprehend the weight of it in his own heart? How shadowy it is kept. It is the shadow which follows the softest light; the minor key of the Song of the Lamb—minor, but sweet still. Imagine Jesus saying to some poor sinner, "Love me, or you must go to hell. Be converted, or burn forever and ever." "True enough!" do you say? Ay! *and as true that he never did it.* His servants do it for him, and men are now groping for escape from their methods. Offenses must come! Dark woes throng the ways of wicked men! The fears and furies, the Erinnyes and Nemesis, are as instinctive to men as their loves and hopes. Christ has infused them into the Gospel, emphatically enough to refute all attempts to doubt or deny them. But he has done so with a loving skill, which uses them to inspire in us the love which casteth out fear. What may be—who can tell to the letter? What is taught by Christ, is not to call a brother *fool*, but to be pure, and to be true to conscience and to God, here and now.

III.

THE WORK OF ST. AUGUSTINE.*

ST. MARK, ix. 43, 44.—And if thine hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

AT the little village of Tagaste, in Numidia, now called Algeria, on November 13, A. D. 354, was born a boy, who was destined to exercise as great an influence on the history of the religious thought of the world as ever any man has done. The empires of conquerors and statesmen have perished and the evidences of their progress for a time have vanished from the face of the earth. But the empire of religious thought has to-day no name that can challenge equality of influence with that of *Aurelius Augustinus*. We know of him generally by the name which cities have been proud to bear, as *St. Augustine*. His father was a Pagan, and his mother a Christian—the boy was both, in turn, and by his experience both in sin and in virtue

* Preached in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Feb. 17, 1878.

interpreted to his age the real conquest, in which the battle between the two systems is destined to end. An eloquent and learned scholar, he yielded to the pathetic yearnings of the mother-heart in him, and the persuasive eloquence of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, and after a sharp and bitter struggle with himself, he became a new man in Christ Jesus, was baptized at thirty-three years of age, and rose to be the greatest power known to the Church of God, in any age since the Ascension of the Master. He died at seventy-six years of age, Bishop of Hippo, in Africa, and left to the world an immortal legacy, in his name and holy character, for his victory over the evils of life; and in his works of religious dogma and morals. He is the greatest doctor recognized as of authority by all Christendom. Honored in the Eastern Church, he has been the standard authority of the Latin Christianity, through all its history, and the Reformers of the sixteenth century looked to him as the last Court of Appeal, next to the Bible, in all doubtful questions in theology, interpretation, or morals. His age was a dark one. The visions of the Apocalypse were coming to pass. The old foundations of the Roman Empire were being destroyed and everything was rushing down to chaos, under the northern flood of barbarism,

then setting in finally, along the whole Mediterranean coast. Horrible cruelties and miseries attended the sack of the Imperial City, and the conquerors of it rise before the mind of the student of history, as terrible avengers of God, sweeping off the remains of a corrupt civilization and destroying the very grass where the feet of their horses fell. Babylon the Great had fallen! had fallen!—and in one hour so great riches had come to nought. That older, profane civilization, begun far back on the banks of the Mesopotamian rivers, and magnificent in its mighty course of conquest, pride, and cruelty, had met its fate, as foreseen by the Seer of lonely Patmos.*

It was an age of gloom and general despair, of untold horrors and savage cruelties, worse than the worst days of the former Pagan persecutions. The Church had, until this period, retained much of her original simplicity, and her childlike faith. The Christians were not a learned class, and—except in very few instances—not a critical people. Doctrinal exactness was mostly unknown, and despite the fierce discussions which arose, their history seems mostly a battle of giants seen through a mist. Men had been hopeful mostly. They had looked vaguely for a millennium as

* Revelation, xviii.

somehow coming to explain the evils of life to them, but now there "was no voice, no sound, nor any one to answer," while taunting cries came on the air, through the blood and darkness of smoke, to ask them, "Where is now thy God?" The old reasonings and explanations of Christianity now failed to comfort the believers or to attract the Pagans. Jerusalem had hardly risen from its ruins; and now the Imperial City of Rome was made to drink the wine-cup of the Wrath of God.

In the early autumn of A. D. 410, eleven hundred and sixty-three years after its foundation, Rome was sacked by the Goths under Alaric. It was the period to which prophecy had been pointed from the beginning. It was the flood which seemed to sweep away the foundations of the old civilization. Thick darkness rested not only on the nations, but on the Church as well. For she found that her battle with the world now demanded an entire change of weapons and a new system of tactics. In other words, faith must give room to philosophy. A new City of God must be found to take the place of the older landmarks of the past. The man to build it was at hand. Then the clear voice of the greatest thinker on sacred things that has ever lived, was heard. Of talents that were unquestioned, of sufficient experience in

the ways of sin, and so able to console those who were like him; of ardent imagination and most pious courage in destroying the remains of sin in his own members, and so skilled to build the City of God on the foundations of that earthly City of Rome, that was ruined by the northern barbarians, he rises before us as the proper * *Imperator* or Leader of that militant City of the Saints. I say all this truth of him freely, because I intend just now to go counter to his opinion on the subject which the text reveals: † *the nature of Gehenna*, or the doctrine of future punishment.

He gave to the subjects of Christian belief logical consistency, and with it the gloomy coloring

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* "He possessed a strong, capacious, argumentative mind; he boldly sounded the dark abyss of grace, predestination, free-will, and original sin; and the rigid system of Christianity which he framed or restored, has been entertained with public applause and secret reluctance by the Latin Church."—*Gibbon*, ch. xxxiii., A. D. 430, p. 550.

† "Good men may be—they often have been—utterly mistaken in their most cherished theology, and in their most impassioned convictions, but good men never live in vain, because their spiritual achievements are more sacred than their doctrines, and their lives more valuable than their beliefs. And systems, too, founded on erroneous prejudices, may grow corrupt and injurious,

> 'And God fulfill himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world,'

but if they be based on sincerity, they cannot fail to leave to mankind a legacy of truth and wisdom."—*Fred. W. Farrar, D.D., F.R.S.*, in St. James's Lectures, lec. I., p. 14.

of his sad age. I do not see how he could help it. I do not blame him for it. But I vow no sort of obedience to his system of divinity. I regard the most of it as a perversion. Just as I could allow the greatness of Hippocrates and refuse to take medicines on his theory, so I reverence Augustine, and claim to differ from his decisions in favor of a higher Master. I part from him altogether in *his idea of God;* I propose now to show the coloring which he, most of all before and in his age, gave to the subject of eternal punishment.

For a long time, the divinity of the Church on many subjects had been very simple, not to say confused. The words of Scripture were accepted very much as children take them. Now, both because this simplicity was bound to cease, in the nature of things, and because the wonderful logic of the old Greek Aristotle was again coming into favor in the Pagan world, the analytical mind of this man became the alembic into which the old faith of the child-day of the Church was thrown and melted, and came out a mixture in which much is pure gold and much is dross. Christianity till then had been mostly regarded as *a life;* henceforth it was to be *a philosophy.* I hold that the St. Paul before him, and the St. Paul

afterward, are two men. Till his day, future punishment had been left very much in the half-shadow of the Scripture. If men asked questions here and there about its details, their replies seem to have varied, according to their tempers and circumstances. They were willing not to know. A dreaminess or mist prevailed over the tendency to definitions. The Fathers of the early Church can hardly be cited for any established systematic views on this subject. Irenæus assigned different habitations to the blessed,* and believed that "those who, in this brief temporal life, have shown themselves ungrateful to Him who bestowed it, shall not justly receive from Him length of days forever and ever." Every such man, "inasmuch as he is created, and has not recognized Him who bestowed [the gift upon him], deprives himself of continuance forever and ever."—See book ii., ch. xxxiv.

Clement of Alexandria had an idea of differing degrees of blessedness, wherein the saints "enter more nearly into the state of impassible identity, so as no longer to have science and possess knowledge, *but to be science and knowledge.*"—*Stromata*, book iv., ch. vi.

* These were Heaven, the Garden, and the City, among which the saints were to be distributed hereafter.—See book v., ch. xxxv.

It was easy for them to pass to the idea of further developments of conditions, for good or bad, after this life. Justin Martyr held that the "souls of the good never die; but others are punished so long as God wills them to exist and to be punished." —*Dial. with Trypho*, ch. v.

Origen, as he held evil to be rather the negation of good than something existing of itself, so he taught a limit to future punishment and a final restoration of all things. The bodies of the lost he held to be *all black*, by which he seems to have meant rather the ignoring of all definition concerning them. The outer darkness was a state of complete ignorance. He thought the design of all punishments to be to heal or to correct, and thus finally to restore the sinner to the favor of God. "The Oriental idea of a purifying fire also occurs during this period, in the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Origen. This purifying fire, however, is not thought to perform its work in the intermediate state, but is either taken in a comprehensive sense, or supposed to stand in some connection or other with the general conflagration of the world." *

This was largely changed from and after the

* See Hagenbach, vol. i., pp. 217 and 219.

age of Augustine. It is to be said in his favor, that he was less severe in his logic, in this direction, than some of his opponents. But he left nothing in the future fates to be imagined. He aimed to give the world *the City of God* which St. John had seen coming down as a bride out of heaven. For much that he accomplished we thank him. He certainly left us *the City of Dogma*, with rocky walls and iron gates and gloomy prisons in it, where racks and thumbscrews, chains and martyr-fires, were native to the place.*

He defined with unhesitating philosophy all the limits and circumstances of the blessed and of the lost. He caught up the slightest allusions to the matter that lay unnoticed in stray texts, rites, symbols, or circumstances in either Testament. He boldly met all the difficulties which daunted others and resolutely put down all tendencies to merciful alleviation of the sufferings of the enemies of Christ. Where breaks occurred in the inspired expressions of the subject, he magnificently spanned them over with bridges of splendid logic, and strengthened his work with

* Mosheim holds Augustine largely responsible for the vital creed of Dogmatism, that "errors in religion are to be visited with penalties and punishments," and thinks him spotted with the leprosy that "to deceive and lie is a virtue when religion can be promoted by it."—Book ii., cent. iv., pt. ii., ch. iii., § 16.

the buttresses of a faultless rhetoric. He did in logic what Dante did in poetry, to map off and make real, to a gross race and for many dark ages after him, the gloomy regions of Gehenna as he saw it. For example, because Christ repeats three times, that a man should choose the loss of a member here on earth as preferable to the punishment of God hereafter, he sees in it only the terrors of the triple repetition and the vehemence of the Lord. He makes Paul's phrase, "*Who is offended and I burn not?*" an argument to prove that fire can burn the soul of a man as well as the body. He strengthens the idea of the undying *worm* by Ecclesiasticus: "As the moth consumes the garment, and the worm the wood, so does grief consume the heart of man." He scouts the notion that either body or soul shall escape infinite agonies, and finds it easier to understand that the soul will do so rather than the flesh, but leaves a choice for the weak, either "to assign the fire to the body and the worm to the soul"—the one really, the other figuratively—or to assign both really to the body. He is ready with facts of physical life, or what his age called science. He says, "For I have already sufficiently made out that animals can live in the fire, in burning without being consumed, in pain without dying, by a miracle of the

most Omnipotent Creator, to whom no one can deny that this is possible, if he be not ignorant, by whom has been made all that is wonderful." He shows a touch of human feeling, when he allows that "the doubt on the question of material fire will remain till the time when the saints shall know the nature of those punishments without the help of experience." He shows to the satisfaction of his age of sorrow and gloom, how fire could be material and yet burn souls and the immaterial spirits of devils. He justifies the Creator for making punishments eternal as balanced against acts which are temporal, and falls back on his dogma of Adam's sin as having been infinite, and necessarily transmissible to every one of his descendants. This dual refraction of conscience, this looking at all things through a double medium, wherein all acts of transgression, when lacking intelligent explanation, in the light of common day, are made to teem with tremendous horrors, in the light of Adam's sin, is his most exquisite and fatal device. In this, multitudes of gloomy divines have followed him. "I know," says a young girl to her Calvinistic father, "that I am a sinner, restless and unhappy; but I *do not* feel that I am the worst person in the world." "Ah!" says the other, "the first trustworthy sign

of God's grace in your heart is, that you feel the awful inheritance of Adam's sin as yours; that you are infinitely and forever guilty of the whole of it; that you feel that you are a hell-deserving sinner, and that hell must be infinite and eternal to meet your deserts." I could weary you with quotations from Calvin of the old world, and from Jonathan Edwards and men of that ilk in this country, which demand of the consciousness of every true Christian, an imperative need of hell as the only native and divine balance against the sin of Adam. It was most of all this terrific dogma which took the whole subject out of its natural place and brought its fiery use into dogmatic appliance to the personal conscience, that marked the labors of this great man, but in this thing of iron-bound dogmatism,* a most mistaken one. One word more of

* If the following passage is orthodoxy, I rejoice in being an heretic. If this is the God whom men are worshiping, we need another revelation. "But eternal punishment seems hard and unjust to human perceptions, because in the weakness of our mortal condition there is wanting that highest and purest wisdom by which it can be perceived how great a wickedness was committed in that first transgression. The more enjoyment man found in God, the greater was his wickedness in abandoning him; and he who destroyed in himself a good which might have been eternal, became worthy of eternal evil. Hence the whole mass of the race is condemned; for he who at first gave entrance to sin has been punished with all his posterity who were in him as in a root, so that no one is exempt from this just and due punishment, unless delivered by

this ancient writer. Though a thorough ascetic, he did not delight to go out of his way, to increase the horrors of this subject, when he could properly help it. He did not fear to adopt any consequences of his arbitrary and mistaken logic; but he stopped there. Again he had the alleviation, which we lack, of a subordinate dogma concerning Purgatory, by which all his baptized friends and neighbors were saved from our peculiar difficulties.

In his age again, preaching did not lack dramatic interest, from the ease and indifference of a prosperous people. His hearers were tremendously in earnest, for or against him.

His ideas were balanced against a church and softened by a system of divinity, that opened the

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mercy and undeserved grace; and the human race is so apportioned that in some is displayed the efficacy of grace, in the rest, the efficacy of just retribution. For both could not be displayed in all; for if all had remained under the punishment of just condemnation, there would have been seen in no one the mercy of redeeming grace. And, on the other hand, if all had been transferred from darkness to light, the severity of retribution would have been manifested in none. But many more are left under punishment than were delivered from it, in order that it may be thus shown what was due to all. And had it been inflicted on all, no one could justly have found fault with the justice of Him who taketh vengeance; whereas, in the deliverance of so many from that just award, there is cause to render the most cordial thanks to the gratuitous bounty of Him who delivers."—*City of God*, bk. xxi., ch. xii.

way of escape freely to all men. Baptism was considered almost a sure refuge from the eternal fires, which he blew into flame. The majority of his readers sought refuge for themselves in "the city of God," as he sketched it, with gates standing ever wide open to receive them. There it was easy for them to look off, and see the smoke of this fiery pit ascending ever for the destruction of heretics and pagans. But with those gates shut, as they are now practically save to a metaphysical and difficult entrance, the same subject is truly an *horribilè decretum.* It is this new combination which is at the bottom of our present excitement on this theme.

I have spoken of a consciousness on my part of differing from many of the popular opinions on this subject, which are now common, and which are so often repeated, that it seems almost like an act of impiety to doubt them. Still, I pretend not to go beyond the language of the Bible, when it is fairly understood, and in the vexed questions of philosophy versus faith, I am willing to accept any charge of inconsistency, as to philosophy, in favor of faith in the great spiritual ideas of Christ.

It does not disturb me at all to be ignorant of many things, or to believe with St. Jerome, that the beginning of wisdom is to know where to

be ignorant. There are many subjects of theology, which I hold, so to say, by believing the two ends of them, which I cannot doubt, though I cannot see through the dark abysses that intervene. For example, it is almost always interpreted, nowadays, that the *fire which is not quenched* signifies, by some secret force of the words, that the parties who are in it burn forever. Without now expressing opinions as to the permanence or otherwise of the fire, or of that for which it is made to stand, save that I suppose it amply sufficient for all practical purposes of present conscience, I suggest only, that the idea of unquenchableness in the fire does not mean that the persons condemned to it are always burning in it. This horrible notion is not necessarily in either the word *Gehenna*, or in the teachings of Christ concerning it. It certainly is not properly found in the story of Dives, which is an allegory, or fable, or a parable, as much as the *Pilgrim's Progress* is. Dives then was in the grave and had no tongue, and really needed none, save in the holy fancy of Christ, who pointed the moral of the tale with his opinion, that a man who will not repent with Moses and the prophets in his hand, will not repent at the horrors of a spirit from the ghastly world of shades. The idea of making the sufferers

of *asbestos* was first patristic and now is sectarian. If I should hear a man refer to a foul field in the vicinage here, which had worms that never die, but feed on the putrefying bodies of animals always, I should of course believe, that his intention was, to express the sufficiency of the race of worms to accomplish the ends of removing offensive material; that they would always be there in numbers to remove the filth and offal of the city. They were so in the valley of Gehenna. This makes a full and complete meaning to the language of our Lord. It was his intention, as I read it, to assure the sinners of his time of the ever-continuing sufficiency of the means of punitive justice, in the city of the saints, which is his Church. And probably, inasmuch as this idea of the present school did not make any headway for some scores of decades after Christ, it was the meaning which at first generally prevailed. The other thought came slowly to the surface, for many reasons. The science of those ages allowed men to believe in salamanders, or beasts, which as Augustine supposed endured life in the midst of agonies of burning.* The pagan poetry of the

* A false science has had its dire influence in this subject. "The philosophers," said Jerome, "are familiar as well as we with the distinction between *a common and a secret fire*. Thus that

classics lent its help. In a later age Dante interpreted to Italian debauchees what Virgil and the other poets had taught the wicked men of his day; things that now in our age come up mostly to scare the wretches who find their guilty pleasures ending in the horrors of delirium tremens, or of the furies of the mad-house.

> Guilt shapes the terror : deep within
> The human heart the secret lies
> Of all the hideous deities ;
> And painted on a ground of sin
> The fabled gods of torment rise.

Chaos and fiery Phlegethon, Dis the gloomy, and dark Cocytus, cares and horrible conceits, men pursued by fate, demons and furies with snaky locks, Gorgons and harpies and chimæras dire, things which you can realize now in the college hospital and at Bloomingdale, came one

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which is in common use is far different from that which we see in divine judgments, whether striking as thunderbolts from heaven, or bursting up out of the earth through mountain-tops ; for it does not consume what it scorches, *but while it burns it repairs*. So the mountains continue ever burning, and a person struck by lightning is even now kept safe from any destroying flame. A notable proof this of the fire eternal ! A notable example of the endless judgment which still supplies punishment with fuel. The mountains burn and last. How will it be with the wicked and the enemies of God ? "—*Apol.*, ch. xlix. The science not having this "secret fire" of fact has vanished—what of the other ?

by one as time went on to take their seats in the valley of Gehenna. Talk of Christ's putting them there! I say again, that if the Church should as a body deny their existence, they would gather there again of themselves. They are *the Disease of Humanity.* Christians in this thing should remember that they are not the artists, to whom it is committed to increase the horrors of despair; that their work is over, as soon as they have proclaimed their divine message, and that they are peculiarly the inheritors of a blessing and not of a curse.

Again, in old times the superstitious beliefs of ignorant races lent an irresistible influence in this direction. Volcanoes, according to the faith of many generations later, were the penal abodes of monstrous giants, who made the regions round them terrible with their howlings under their punishments. It was therefore natural, that the misinterpretation of the words of Christ should creep in unnoticed, that the undyingness of the worm should be transferred to the body of the subject who suffered, and that the unquenched fire should signify the eternity of the punishment, rather than its finality and sufficiency.

Again, it is common always to bolster up one text with another, taken from other Scriptures

somewhat at random. Thus it may occur to some that Isaiah asks,* "Who among us shall dwell *with everlasting burnings?*" as if that somehow settled the doubt. They do not notice that the prophet answers his own question, thus: "He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly;" in other words, as Milton has it: "The mind is its own place, and of itself can make a hell of heaven, a heaven of hell."

Again, the book of Revelation is made to do service in this direction. It is the book least understood of any in the Bible. As I read it, the Redeemed there appeared to the Apostle St. John as looking off the walls of the Holy City, or the Church, *now*, and seeing, just as the Jew of old contemplated it from the temple porches, the smoke of the valley to the south, always rising to tell that the city should be free from injury, that the worm in its creeping way and the fire in its sharp way, were always ministers of good and servants of God.

The text then tells us, in my reading of it, of one fact, that the final punishment is sufficient. The motive power of Christian purity is now in that tremendous balance—of which death is the emblem—around which God has gathered the

* Ch. xxxiii. 14.

strong language which inasmuch as it passes into the contingencies of a world unknown is always awful by its own nature. It is the balance of a short pain or a trifling loss here on earth—and what there? Beyond that I care not to go. Do you ask, is it eternal? The question is important, and deserves consideration by itself. I think, that we shall find that Christ, and the Bible also, has answered this, in his own way.

IV.

ETERNAL—ITS USES.*

ST. MATTHEW, xxv. 46.—And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Εις κολασιν αιονιον—εις ζοην αιονιον.

IN the original Greek, there is only one word used for both sides of this final contrast of human life. The word is *αἰονιον*. If it means everlasting or eternal, it is the same in both. If there is a limit to one, there is, so far as this word goes, a limit to the other. We may read the text: "These shall go away into everlasting or eternal punishment, and the righteous into everlasting or eternal life." So far as the mere word establishes an identity of meanings, it is complete. I confine my remarks just now within that one consideration.

These are the last words of the public teachings of Christ, which St. Matthew saw fit to record. He began his public teachings with "Blessed are

* Preached in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Brooklyn, Feb. 17, 1878.

the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He concluded it with the assurance of their possession of "life eternal."

The point of interest here is in the word *eternal.* Every person takes it for granted that he has the exact meaning of the word in his mind, and despite all the difficulties which meet him, never stops to inquire whether in plunging off into the most metaphysical notion which enters into things of morals, he has the true meaning of the word which he is using at every turn. What is eternal? The objector will hastily answer: "Why, it is that which has absolutely no beginning nor end. Go back into the illimitable past and there is no conceivable point in the ideas of its unnumbered ages where you may get any nearer to a beginning of it, than you were when you started. Or fly on the wings of the swiftest thought, into the endless, unmeasurable future, and after ten million worlds have risen and existed for as long a period as Darwin must assign to this present orb, and have waned and perished, you will not have moved a second toward the end." Now, that idea is philosophical. I am about to affirm:

I. That it is *a necessary idea.* The mind of man in its very constitution requires it.

II. That *it is an utterly impossible idea*, either to express or reason on with any definiteness. And,

III. That the scriptural use of the word is peculiar, and that the metaphysical sense of eternity is not found in it, except where it is possibly by implication, ascribed to the one God, who by the prophet is said to "inhabit eternity," and by the apostle is claimed to be the *only One* "who hath immortality."

The end of such a process of thought, is:

I. That the Scriptures do not raise those perplexed questions about the word which are in the minds of all who leave the clear light of the circle which is covered by the rays of the sun of righteousness: and,

II. That eternal life and eternal death, or punishment are relative terms.

I. Eternity, like infinity, is a necessary apprehension. No mind thinks at all without taking both for granted. For example, you cannot think of space without thinking of it as having no possible limits. To illustrate this remark let us suppose that the farthest bit of star-dust that comes across the lens of the telescope, of a clear, cold winter night, is so far removed from us that with the quickest motion which we can conceive, it would take millions of years to reach it. Then

take that conception as your inch measure and travel, in imagination till your mind simply falls down exhausted, and you are then in the center of space, just as you were when you started. You have not moved one hair-line toward the boundary of the unmeasurable. You cannot get nearer to it than you are now. Your mind is so constituted that in healthy thought you cannot fancy yourself ever any nearer to it than you are now. I affirm that I cannot begin to think on any of the physical propositions which enter into the problems of life without taking this thought of infinite space for granted. It is just as necessary to any clear thinking, as any of the common postulates of the mind.

It is the same with the apprehension of the thought of *time*. Its first assertion comes to us as it ought to have done, from the center of that dry desert of the Peninsula of Sinai, and from the lips of Moses as he looked up to the heavens or to the everlasting hills around, and his thought put on the stately march of the world's first lyric poem as he said it: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art—*Ael*," *i. e.*, the Strong Upholder of all. The mind of man as man, refuses

any limit to either of these thoughts. You cannot escape from them. They haunt you as dreams of childhood. They are the deep undertone of the bass notes of life. They are so low that the ear refuses to determine their place on the chromatic scale. You have this feeling in the sough of the wind in the pines; in the deep thunder of the midnight sky, or in the ceaseless beat of the surf on the ocean beaches. It comes in the—as we say—boundless horizon of the ocean, or the prairie, which we journey over day after day, and yet the sign of any end is still as remote as when we began. That old Israelitish religion was cradled in the very arms of this nurture. Every religion of earth, then, and since outside of it, has dealt largely in efforts to determine and use this very idea of eternity. The older Brahminical and Egyptian religions dealt constantly and sublimely in the effort to exhaust this notion. Every Oriental heresy of the Church which offered to accept the Jewish religion where Christ left it, sought to engraft on it this system of thought. As long as Christianity lay cradled in the East, the continual story of it was the record of efforts to compel it to adopt some of the Oriental theories of *æons*, of these atom-integers by which men had tried to spell out eternity. Any unin-

spired man taught as Moses was, in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, would inevitably have given room to some sort of scheme of spanning the abysses of thought, either by transmigrations, or by Brahminical surges back into the original Godhead. All manner of fancies and conceits have been tried and have had their day, in a vain struggle to weave this idea into the practical morals of mankind. Continually failing, it continually returns. It is a necessary idea, in any thought of the Creator of all things.

II. But practically it is an impossible thought. The only attempt to express it is by a paradox. We talk of a "circle whose center is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere." But it is paradoxical conceit. It is merely giving it up as inconceivable. It is a learned way of saying nothing. It is science trying to *believe*. There is as much impossibility, or rather impotence in grasping the idea, as there is compulsion to attempt it.*

* "The *Absolute* and the *Infinite* are thus, like the *Inconceivable* and the *Imperceptible*, names indicating, not an object of thought or of consciousness at all, but the mere absence of the conditions under which consciousness is possible. The attempt to construct in thought an object answering to such names, necessarily ends in contradiction; a contradiction, however, which we have ourselves produced by the attempt to think; which exists in the act of thought, but not beyond it; which destroys the conception as such, but indicates nothing concerning the existence or non-existence of

True philosophy has settled down on the conviction, that the idea of eternity is absolutely necessary, only as we think of God, and of no one else. True philosophy gets back after these vain efforts at definition, to Isaiah's conviction of One Being who inhabiteth eternity, or to the apostle's word, "One, who only hath immortality."

There is need in our thought of either the eternity of matter, or of the eternity of one creative cause, who exists before and beneath matter. The revelation of that Being stands to-day on the thought of the poet of "one great First Cause, least understood." Moses placed himself on the monotheistic citadel in assuming the existence of this cause, without a word of proof. "In the beginning God created" the world. And no one has yet gone behind his fact. Isaiah saw God inhabiting eternity, and dwelling alone. In the whole Bible, the word immortality is never used as the attribute of any person save God; and

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that which we try to conceive. *It proves our impotence, and it proves nothing more.* Or rather, it indirectly leads us to believe in the existence of that Infinite which we cannot conceive; for the denial of its existence involves a contradiction, no less than the assertion of its conceivability. We thus learn that the provinces of Reason and Faith are not co-extensive; that it is a duty, enjoined by Reason itself, to believe in that which we are unable to comprehend."—*Limits of Religious Thought,* Maunsell. Lectures ii. and iii., *passim.*

then but once.* St. Paul, in one of those lightning flashes of his, contrasts the present humble confession of the martyrs, with the glory that shall be theirs, which God will show, "the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; *who only hath immortality*, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto: whom no man hath seen nor can see; to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen."† Once only does the Scripture speak of an *endless life*. Christ, the High Priest of the Church, is "made such, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power *of an endless life*."‡ The word is equivalent to *indestructible*, and covers the period of the world's needs.

III. We come now directly to the peculiar use of the word by which we express eternity in common morals. One law is plain as ruling in the Bible in all matters of morals. It never goes beyond the horizon of facts that are practical, when it can avoid it: it states as little as is required while there, and it gets back as soon as may be to common ground. Its words for *eternity* are all

* The word ἀθανασία is used, 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54, of that spiritual body which "this mortal" will put on. It is equivalent to the word im- (*i. e.*, not) mortality. The word ἀφθαρσία is twice rendered immortality.—Rom. ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 10.

† 1 Tim. vi. 16. ‡ Heb. viii. 16.

regulated by this divine instinct.* They set before us a definite fact and stop at it. When we are on the sea, and out of sight of land, we have one hemisphere and one horizon around us. In crossing the ocean we change them all the time, and have as many hemispheres and horizons as we have days. On the vaster sea of unlimited ages we can imagine these units of separate horizons according to the subject before us, now covering the time of one covenant, and then covering the times of all the covenants, and we have the practical use of the Hebrew words for *eternity* and *everlasting*. Thus, in Genesis, we hear of the *everlasting hills;* in Habakkuk, of the *everlasting mountains;* in

* Bishop Lowth commenting on the words "*everlasting covenant*" (Jer. xxxii. 40) says: "The Jewish covenant, with respect to the ceremonial ordinances contained in it, is sometimes called an *everlasting* covenant (see Gen. xvii. 13; Lev. xxiv. 8; Isa. xxiv. 5); *berith olam* in the Hebrew, because those ordinances were to continue for a long succession of time, called *olam*, in that language (see note on xxv. 9), and to last till the new *olam*, or 'the age of the Messias,' called αἰῶν μέλλων, 'the age,' or 'the world to come,' Heb. ii. 5; vi. 5. But when this expression is applied to the Gospel covenant, there is peculiar emphasis contained in it, implying that it should never be abolished, or give way to any other dispensation (see Jer. l. 5; Isa. lv. 3; compare with Ps. lxxxix. 34, 35)." On ch. xxv. 9, he says: "The Hebrew word *olam* doth not always signify *eternity*, or perpetuity in a strict sense, but is sometimes taken for such a duration as had a remarkable period to conclude it," etc. The word *perpetual, olam, in solitudines sempiternas*, Vulg., ονειδισμον αἰωνιον, LXX., here, "is to be restrained to the period of seventy years, mentioned ver. 11."

Exodus, of *the everlasting priesthood, i. e.*, the Jewish, and in Leviticus of the *everlasting statutes* of the Mosaic covenant. In Numbers, the word *eternal* is translated by the phrase, *throughout their generations;* which is the one, general meaning of it in all these cases.

Then the kingdom of the Lord Jehovah is, in the Psalms, an everlasting kingdom and his dominion throughout all generations. In the Book of Daniel, the proud king Nebuchadnezzar bows his head to the God of the prophet. "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion from generation to generation."* In these cases it is the relative idea which determines the meaning and limits the time.

Now in all the New Testament, and certainly in the text, the word by which we get at the notion of *eternal,* has this one meaning, of long-continued time or duration, an *æon,*† or, as I have put it, *an horizon.* The Vulgate Bible translates it generally, *in sæcula sæculorum,* or *to ages of ages.* The *forever and ever* of our Church ascriptions has the same force. The Bible is a practical book, meant

* Dan. iv. 34.

† See the meanings given to the word by a classic authority. "Always, perpetually, often, frequently, uninterruptedly, successively, in uninterrupted succession, at every or at all times, for a long while, now."—*Donnegan's* Greek Lexicon. See his examples.

for common use among men; it has lost sight of the philosophical idea altogether, and kept almost exclusively to the ordinary one, of *unlimited time or duration.* When it says eternal life, it does not deal with the philosophical thought at all. It is only the horizon of its own view at the time which comes up to the mind. It calls hills and mountains eternal, and yet they perish, by its own showing; it terms the priesthood and the statutes of the transient Levitical service eternal, though it proves them in their own nature "waxing old and vanishing away." It covers the times of the race of man by the same word, and then when it seeks to go higher it simply multiplies the word by itself, just as a child would do. Now there is only one eternity, as there is only one space. Two eternities are an absurdity. The very use of the plural of æons, or ages, proves that the word did not convey the philosophic idea to its writers. It simply means a duration, which for all practical purposes, is not limited; not that it has no limit, but that for the purposes of the writer the limit is not drawn.

Now this has been a dull argument, but it is important, in my judgment, for it is by mixing things which come to us from two different sources that the Scripture has been faulted, and difficulties

raised against it, that are due to the reader, and not to the book. The Bible does not of itself raise the perplexities which men find in the subject of eternal punishment. They are made by mixing philosophy and revelation. "But," says some one, "you must mix them somehow." I am doubtful of that necessity. Here is where it is better to be "converted and become as little children." Here the confessed ignorance of the trained scholar is better than "the wisdom of the wise" of this world, which God has confounded.

Thus, to apply the argument, the revelation tells one of the horizons, up to the day of its finality, which is the day of judgment. Clouds and darkness lie all around the line. Here and there a ray of light shoots off into the darkness, and we see that the same God who is dwelling in the thick darkness, and doing us good, is ruling there as here, and we take courage. The waves heave and roll under us, and we feel the storms which come to us from far-off regions. But the Bible tells us of the true chart and gives us the magnetic mystery of an all-conquering faith, by which we can outlive them. The book is not an astronomy, and despite the monks, Galileo once for all asserted it. The world owes him all thanks for his success. It is not a cosmogony, and geologists

no longer fear the penalties of heresy for their fidelity to science. It is not in the broader sense a philosophy of eternity, and it is free from the perplexities which men are pressing upon it just now. It covers the ground taken by the natural conscience: that there is a broad horizon, beginning with "In the beginning, God created"—and ending with, "Even so come, Lord Jesus." It opens with the race in its primeval purity, and tells the sad tale of

> "that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
> Restore us and regain the blissful seat."

It ends with that full story of redemption, illustrated by the history of one nation, as the paradigm of the ways of God. It is because it refuses to raise these questions about a philosophic eternity that it fails to satisfy them.

In the middle ages, when such savages as the German Henry, or such giant-brutes as Charles the Bold, held men's lives and women's chastity in perpetual dread of their lawless tyranny, the best men of the Church read out of the Bible the autocracy of the Bishop of Rome and the miracle of transubstantiation. The conscience of the age accepted both dogmas. We read neither now, for

we need neither. "Ah," says some one, "a book that means all things, means nothing." Look again! Hildebrand, when he combated tyranny for the rights of the poor, and Radbertus, when he made the elements of the mass pregnant with superstitious horrors for the sensual souls of marauding barons and robber chieftains, both read alike with us, and with all good men, the one great lesson of the book: "How God would have all men live in purity and charity toward all, that they might please him in righteousness and truth all the days of their life." The Light of the world stands on the rock of ages, like Minot's ledge light in the salt waves of Boston Bay. Winter gathers its piles of ice and frozen spray around that slender shaft of stone. The dark fogs congeal around the lantern, and the lighthouse-keeper, as he struggles to keep to his duty, might well chant the *De profundis* of Jonah of old—if he had heart to chant at all. But the sailor, as the snowy storm from Labrador rages around him, looks to the light, and catching a passing glimmer of it, makes his way to the haven west of him. Again the summer sea rolls its tiny waves peacefully along the Cohasset rocks, and makes music as we pass the same spot with song and glee. The snow and ice are all gone, and the winds are all

lulled to rest, but the light shines on the same. It is only the scene that has changed, not the light. The winter storms could not quench it. Let us see to it that the quiet does not tempt us to neglect it.

So finally, I am forced to the conclusion that eternal life and eternal death, or punishment, are relative terms. By that I mean, they cover just so much ground as the conscience and reason, illuminated by the Spirit of Christ, needs to have covered, and no more. This is an humbling admission.

It is so much the fashion in our later divinities to assume for man a future eternity, in the philosophic sense of absolute unendingness, that it may cause some of you to start at this admission concerning eternity, as if all things must come to an end, if we admit the contrary. It is easy to say that, in the text, if the life is eternal, the punishment must be. By the mere words, this is true. Or to say again, "If the punishment is shortened, then the glory of the saints must be curtailed." I admit this by the words alone. But is evil eternal? Is death self-vivified and non-dying forever.* In the absolute infinity of future time is

* I confine the admission of equality of duration to the *words alone.* When we regard the ideas of life and death, the equality

there to be no possible end of evil? And of all evils conceivable by us, in our little sphere, what compares for a moment with that of the infinite suffering of our own brothers and friends? I confess that my mind is so made up by nature and education, that I cannot conceive of the eternity of evil. It is not the horror of it, not any passional excitement about it that gives me a choice, but it is the inability of the mental power to believe in a good God and an eternal evil; in other words, in an eternal devil. For one, I am willing to accept immortality, on the same conditions that I am living on to-day. If I wake up in eternity, to find

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vanishes. Life *is* and of itself exists; duration belongs to it. Mere *death* is not-being, and has *in se* no duration. The two following extracts, from the work before quoted, are suggestive to the thoughtful mind:

"In ninety-nine instances out of every hundred in which the issue of God's judgment is referred to, its effect is declared to be to bring the subjects of it to an end which is described as *death, destruction, perishing, perishing utterly, corruption;* and, negatively, as exclusion from *life* or *life eternal.* Such phrases as *endless woe, endless misery*, are unknown to the Bible. The ordinary language of the pulpit on this subject is systematically unscriptural.

"The radical idea of destruction, that is extinction of being, is first taken out of the term death; then the word is made to stand for its opposite, *eternal being;* and then the associated idea of misery is grafted upon the stock of the converted primary; the result being that *destruction* stands for endless misery."—*Life in Christ*, pp. 356–7.

See also Appendix A.

myself mistaken in a thousand things—and I expect to do so—I now recognize myself as a religious being, so far as I feel sure of one single thing; that I can go nowhere and be nowhere, in either space or time, and not find that God is good, and that Jesus Christ was his only true Revealer. In the faith of what he has said of God, I am willing to meet the Day of Judgment: when as the common voice of humanity always and everywhere has declared, Pagan, Jew, Christian alike, he will judge the world in righteousness: and I expect to find, that all that his Son has said will be tremendously true; and to hear his sentence in some manner which will be echoed by all the myriads of mankind: "these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into everlasting life." Then—and what it means from the inspired lips of John the Divine, I cannot tell now, but I expect to know then—two fierce monsters, two great living horrors which have ruled the fears of men in iron bondage, shall be dragged to the foot of the throne and receive their sentence. "And Death and Hell (Hades, where the souls of men are now) shall be cast into the lake of fire." And the sigh of relief that will come from all the living creatures around the throne will take words and utter, "This is the second death." But pause and

look! Jesus rises from his throne. One scene still remains, to close the inspired volume. "Then cometh the End, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign—and he has then—till he hath put all things under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death; for he hath put all things under his feet." Then he breaks the golden scepter of his righteous reign, his everlasting dominion which there ends in form, for every mystery in it is ended, every evil conquered, and "himself is subject to Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." *

Up to this point, I understand the Bible and

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* "It cannot therefore be denied, that if the restoration is sanctioned in any passage, it is in this. However, the defenders of this doctrine should not overlook the fact, that neither here nor in any other passage of the Sacred Scriptures is the final recovery of all evil men, nay, even of demons and Satan himself, expressed openly and in a definite form; a circumstance calculated to awaken serious reflection as to the propriety of making such an opinion the subject of public instruction."—*Olshausen* on 1 Cor. xv. 28, and the note of the same: "*Paul never openly speaks of the resurrection of the wicked.* However, there certainly appear in the Holy Scriptures, and doubtless for wise motives, contradictory doctrines on this important point; and for this reason *we should do well to leave their enigmatical statements to the indefiniteness in which they have been given to us.*"

Nature in all her realms of plant and insect, and bird and beast, yea, and yearning living souls, to reach. Beyond it, I hear no voice to guide me, but the feeble mutterings of that wisdom of the world which as St. Paul none too truly said, is foolishness with God, as it surely has been foolishness in men.

V.

DOCTRINE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.*

GENESIS, xviii. 25.—Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

THIS question of Abraham addressed to that remarkable person who appeared to him in the plains of Mamre, is simply grand in its boldness, in its instinctive trustfulness, and in its expressing the solid foundation of the faith on which all religion is built. It is the first question of the religious spirit, it is the last question of every perplexity, after the purest heart has struggled back on the stairway of revelation, into the presence of God. It is the amulet of the pious soul in all things that happen here below. The one creed that is common to all good men is, "that God is, and that he is the rewarder of all that diligently seek him." † The question is exquisitely beautiful. What Abraham was thinking of the

* Preached in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Feb. 24, 1878.
† Heb. xi. 6.

strange personage before him we can now only conjecture. He certainly recognized the fact, somehow, that he had in his hands the power of life and death over all the people of the cities of the plain. He evidently felt that the time of pleading for them was short, that the day of vengeance was at hand, and that the approaching destruction was horrible. It would seem that the other two "men," as they are called,* had left him alone with this One, whom he saw to be the superior personage, and that they were speeding to consummate the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He urges his plea, therefore, for the guilty cities with a hurried forgetfulness of logic, "Let the few righteous interpose for the many sinners of these cities." Trembling, the patriarch must have been, for he is in the presence of God, the Avenger. He says: "I have taken upon me to speak unto Jehovah." He is not intimidated: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" It is a grand boldness. It certainly allows us to found in calm logic all reasonings of the future judgment on the human idea of perfect justice, and to insist on all doubtful interpretations being strictly subjected to that rule. In all things which are not doubtful,

* Gen. xviii. 2, 22.

I grant that it is impiety to attempt to be more just than God, or wiser than the Omniscient. But it is not for any man, or any set of men, to claim the like respect for any of their interpretations, no matter how probable they may seem.

Priests and doctors talk to us of the duty of the common people submitting the reason to the dogmas which they claim as inferences from revelation. To revelation itself I bow without a question, when I know it to be such, but to no man's inferences from it. I see here God himself appealing to the great heart which he has given men. I hear from Abraham that divinest plea for mercy, which makes the music of humanity—which rose from the cross—which rises to-day on a poet's lips:

> "And through the dreary realm of man's despair
> Star-crowned an angel walks, and lo! God's hope is there."

It is, then, with this principle in mind that I ask you to look carefully at the condition of souls after death, as it lies in the Old Testament. The chief importance of this examination just here is this: we shall then see clearly how the subject was correlated to the words of Christ, which I have already given concerning the valley of Gehenna. No other ideas must then be associated, as of necessity, with his words concerning Gehenna,

than such as naturally belonged to them in the usage of his age.

I. First, the Israelites did certainly use the same general words for the dwelling-place of all the dead, whether saints or sinners. The good and the bad persons were supposed to go to the same places. If you and I were standing by the coffins of Ahab, the terrible Macbeth of his day, or of Josiah, the noble and pious reformer of a later period, the same scriptural words would come to our lips, concerning each king, if we take those words as we now find them in the Old Testament. They had one word for the habitation of all the dead. It was the word* *Sheol*, the hollow, vast, under-ground vault. It is the word which is translated *hell* in the English Bible. It is the word which we have in the Apostles' Creed: "He descended into hell," *i. e.*, Christ descended thither. Christ descended, as the rubric before the Creed gives it, into "the place of departed spirits." Now, I take it for granted, just here, that no one supposes that Christ went to the lake of fire, or in any intelligible sense went into the bottomless pit of the damned. Even Calvin, that man of iron nerve and ice-bound heart, going through the thoughts of God's book, like Spenser's iron man Talus, with crashing flail,

* It is rendered "*the grave*," thirty-three times.

cleaving his way by main force, did not dare to say this, but made a hell for Christ, as on the cross, there enduring all that God's wrath could add of infinite horrors and agonies, to what men and devils did to the meek Sufferer. It means in the Creed only this, that he really died, not in appearance, but in fact; died truly and verily, and that his soul was parted from the body, as any other soul is parted from any other body, and went, as St. Peter says, "to the spirits in ward." * The Nicene Creed has very much the same thought in the words, "He suffered and was buried."

Now, Sheol comes from a verb, *sha-al*, which means: 1, *to dig* or *hollow out a place;* 2, to ask or question. It is well to note just here, that it has no sort of idea of punishment of any kind, peculiar to it. I give you the meanings of the word on the authority of the lexicon alone, and of all others, that of *Gesenius*, who is of the best reputation for his passionless science on such points. He treats it thus: "Sheol, Hades, Orcus, the under-world; *Sept.* usually, ἅδης, or once, θάνατος, Death; † a vast subterranean place; ‡ full of thick darkness where dwell the shades of the dead; to which are poetically ascribed valleys,

* 1 Pet. iii. 19.

† 2 Sam. xxii. 6.

‡ Job, xi. 8; Deut. xxxii. 22.

and also gates and bars. The dying are said to go down to Sheol. Those who save the life of any one are said to deliver him from Sheol. Elsewhere Sheol is said to devour all; to be insatiable; to be stern and cruel. To it, by prosopopœia, are ascribed snares, with which it lies in wait for men: and those who escape death are said to make a covenant with Sheol. By metonymy, Sheol is put for its inhabitants. As to the etymology, it is a *cavity*, a *hollow*, *subterranean place;* just as the German, hollen, hell, is originally the same with hohle, a hollow cavern, and as the Latin *cœlum* is from the Greek κοιλος, hollow. The usual derivation has been from the notion of asking, demanding, since Orcus lays claim unsparingly to all alike, whence the epithet "*Orcus rapax.*" Thus far the lexicon. It is the classic decision of the point, and, I think, is generally unquestioned by the best scholars. It is not the sect-notion of any preacher. It is the judicial decision of the linguist. You will notice that there is nothing of punishment in the word. It is *the under-ground world* into which all men go alike, good and bad. It is the twin word with death or the grave. Poetically it becomes in imagination a great, monstrous being, filled with rage and cruel passion, as St. Paul once uses it in his cry of victory over it: "O death, where is thy

sting? O hell (*i. e.*, Sheol, or Hades), where is thy victory?" And to make the cut of this thought more clear, St. John at last sees both these vampires, as two great giants, whose fury is spent, cast into the lake of fire, not to be burned forever and ever, but to be *burned up*, as no longer having any right to be.

The inhabitants of this under-world were supposed to have been of greater size than ordinary, as if the darkness of the place gave it to them. So ghosts, when wandering in graveyards, always gain something in size on the imagination of the timid. The grandest poetical passage of the Old Testament upon this place is that where the Prophet Isaiah personifies the Empire of Babylon, as if he saw it in the person of its king, going down to destruction, under the power of God, to make room for the prosperity of his beloved Israel.* "Hell [Sheol] from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming; she stirreth up the dead for thee, all the chief ones of the earth; she hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak unto thee, Art thou become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to Sheol, the noise of thy viols; the worm is spread

* Is. xiv. 9.

under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer [*i. e.*, Day Star, Light-Bearer], son of the morning!" The whole passage is too long to cite here. But it shows clearly what were the general notions of this under-vault, or deeper grave of the shades of men, in the imaginations of the Israelites. Into it went all men. It was dark, vast, subterranean, silent, temporary; filled with sleeping-places for the souls of saints and sinners. To Job, as he looked to it, it was a place of thickest darkness.* "Are not my days few? Cease—let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, to the land of darkness and the shadow of death. A land of darkness, as darkness—of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." The Psalmist asks in a sea of troubles: "Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise thee? Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark, and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?"† He answers the question: "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence."‡ And again: "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the

* Job, x. 21, 22. † Ps. lxxxviii. 10-12. ‡ Ps. cxv. 17.

grave [Sheol], who shall give thee thanks?"* Again, "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth?"† Thus King Hezekiah prays against death: "For the [Sheol] grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth."‡ Does the psalmist say that "the wicked and they who forget God, shall go to Hades, or Sheol"? He also says that he himself will be there. It was the common lot. It was a word just as applicable to the future of good men as to bad; yea, speaking in the name of the sinless Messiah, he says: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption."§ And St. Peter, in the great sermon of Pentecost, catches at this word, thus: "The patriarch David is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing God's promises, he spake it of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, nor did his flesh see corruption."‖

Now it is evident, thus far, that there is no

* Ps. vi. 5. † Ps. xxx. 9. ‡ Is. xxxviii. 18.
§ Ps. xvi. 10. ‖ Acts, ii. 29-31.

meaning of future punishment in this word, which is translated *hell* in the Old Testament. I have shown before that the true word of punishment is that used for the first time by Christ himself. I pass to another use of the Old Testament. The first burials of the bodies of men of which we hear in the early ages of the world, were in caverns. On the death of Sarah, Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah, "that he might bury his dead out of his sight.* It is interesting to know in passing, that, at this late day, of all the tombs and sepulchers and mausoleums of earth, that one has never yet been touched by profane hands. However men have differed, as Israelites, Christians, or Mussulmans, on other matters, they have always held to the one reverence for the faith, and guarded the slumbers of the "father of many nations." Abraham sleeps there to-day, side by side with the dust of her who followed him as a faithful wife in all his wanderings. Thither in due time came Isaac, and Rebekah, and Leah, and afterward from distant Egypt, with strange pomp and circumstance of mourning, Jacob. Now, I do not say that it was because of this custom of burial, but certainly it was in keeping with it that the common phrase

* Gen. xxiii, 4.

came up on the page of Scripture to describe a man's departure from earth, "*he was gathered to his fathers,*" or "he sleeps with his fathers." Its opposite was to be cast forth to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the earth, to be disgraced with the burial of a dog or an ass. This phrase seems to have satisfied the Israelites for ages, as the only question to be raised at death. They used it indiscriminately of the good and the bad. Abijam, son of the rebel Jeroboam, and fit son of his evil sire: Joram, child of Ahab, the worst of the kings, and walking in the ways of his father, and Menahem, utterly detested by every good man in his age, each slept with his fathers, as well as the pious David, the wise Solomon, and the reformer, Josiah. This was all they said of them. As the pious Jew stood by the side of an enshrouded friend or foe, there was somehow in his mind the text, and little else: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" I do not doubt for a moment that human nature was then what it is now; that there were denunciations and woes which marked the rash judgments of men then as they do now. But, and this is all that we are to ask now, do they appear on the page of the inspired word of God, so that they become rules for us in the explanations of the future con-

ditions of men in eternity? There is a marked absence in all the Old Testament of any such language. 'A man has gone to his fathers! he has gone to the receptacle for all living! he has gone to Sheol—the world of shades—the under-grave,' seems to have been the utmost of their common creed.

I pause here to instance one apparent exception which will show how easy it is to fall into error. Hear the prophet Isaiah: * "For *Tophet* is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep, large; the pile thereof, fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." "What more," some one asks, "can be desired than this, to show that the Jews did believe in the fiercest notion of hell?" Let us look at it. It is this same valley of Tophim, or drum-place, where they burned the children so that evil mothers and baser fathers might wash their consciences clean and wholesome and sweet again. And, at the first sight it seems as if we had here all that Christ said about it ages afterward. But it has no such meaning, as may be learnedly proved by classic argument, if we had to do with scholars. See! Tophet is ordained of old—the margin

* Ch. xxx. 33.

says, very properly, *from yesterday.* That is the Hebrew. The "of old" is not very old. The Assyrian king Sennacherib is looming in the prophet's vision. He is approaching for the destruction of the city. He will not accomplish it in person, but it will come none the less, and Jerusalem shall yet be made like *Tophet*, and her houses shall be defiled as that foul place; her citizens shall be slain there by the Assyrians, as again they will be crucified by the Romans till room shall fail for them. It is in no sense of future eternal punishment that the prophet is speaking, but of that inevitable destruction of the city of Jerusalem, which was sure to issue from its crimes, and which its corruptions made necessary.* You have the same thought in Jeremy:† "They have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart. Therefore, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter, for they shall bury in Tophet

* The running title at the head of the chapter, in our Bible, reads: "*God's wrath, and the people's joy in the destruction of Assyria.*"

† Jer. vii. 32.

till there be no place." Twice did that fearful tide of blood and fire sweep over that fatal place. The Jews who listened to the Sermon on the Mount, as our Lord caught up this word for a new and deeper use, knew of one occasion in their history, and some of them were destined to experience the evils of the second destruction. Go and look at the two destructions of Jerusalem, and ask if all the best interests of mankind were not promoted in the main by either event. It surely is not the revelation of the sinners' hell—though it is regularly made to do wretched service for it in the mouths of the ignorant.

Once more. There are some striking events in the history of the Old Covenant which bear on this theme. The Flood in the days of Noah, the destruction of the cities of the plain, and the overthrow of the armies of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, became the instructive lessons in the mouths of the prophets of the ways of God. They entered into the poetry of inspired prophecy and psalm. Thus Hosea exhorted the backsliders of his day in these words: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? or deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admâh? or set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me. My repentings are kindled together." Another patriotic prophet

sees Babylon overthrown, as Sodom and Gomorrah. The book of Isaiah closes with words which tremble on the edge of the coming revelation of one great holy Catholic Church of all the nations of the earth, which was to take the place of the older, narrower, and imperfect Covenant. He sees the saints of that nobler system "go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." *

It was here on the tremble of this thought that Christ began his revelation of the last things. But I claim that the definite revelation of the future world, either for joy or sorrow, so far as this present discussion is intended, is not to be found in the Old Testament. It was in no sense the intention of that covenant to do either. It was emphatically Christ "who brought light and immortality to light in the Gospel," and with it, sketched in shadows, the conditions on which men will receive it. The Law in all its parts and ordinances had only "a shadow of good things to come." Its "weakness and unprofitableness" were manifest. It made nothing perfect, but was the bringing in of a better hope, by the which we

* Is. lxvi. 24.

[illegible] God. These last things were held by it in shadows.* The shadows, it is true, were from the coming Sun of Righteousness, and they indicated the general lines of future revelations—but they were shadows still.

We have in the book of Ecclesiasticus, which is not inspired, but which is a very important testimony, the last thoughts of writers and teachers among the Jews of the age just before Christ; and it is all summed up in the practical wisdom of a worldly policy, as if the

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* I do not enter here on the consideration of Daniel xii. 2, 3, for lack of space. While the unlearned reader of the Bible can see no difficulty in explaining the meaning of these verses on the common theories of the day, it is certain that the learned will pause in their decision. The following quotations may show the reasons of my silence. "To whom and to what do these verses (1–3) refer? The primary application seems clear. The phrases 'at that time,' 'a time of trouble,' 'the wise,' 'the understanding ones,' closely connect these verses with the previous chapter (xi. 40). Therefore if the latter portion of chapter xi. refers primarily to events connected with the last days of Antiochus Epiphanes, the opening verses of chap. xii. may be taken to refer to the same period."—*Speaker's Commentary in loc.*

I should be glad to know that the questions which have exercised the ingenuity and baffled the research of many of the best scholars of all past times, concerning "the eternal and mysterious Israelite," "the Apocalyptic Seer, who would revive again in the nation's utmost need," "tarrying till the Lord come," could be settled. But where the concurrence of such critics as Bentley, Arnold, Milman, and Thirlwall, in England; as Gesenius, Ewald, Bleek, De Wette, and Kuenan, compels the doubts which arise, I must leave the passage undetermined.

whole matter was at last recognized as out of their reach. "My son, let tears fall down over the dead, and begin to lament, as if thou hadst suffered great harm thyself; and then cover his body according to the custom, and neglect not his burial. When the dead is at rest, let his remembrance rest; and be comforted for him." *

The doctrine then of the Israelites on the whole subject, in my judgment, lies practically in the form of the text: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Their knowledge was doubtful and shadowy. It was an unsolved question, as the light was not communicated to them to answer it. The "true light" did not shine for them. They saw all men die. They could not solve the perplexities of varying conditions in life any more than we can—the wicked prospering, dying, and leaving the rest of their substance to their babes —the righteous often oppressed, and suffering and perishing from the earth. But it only demanded of them a deeper faith in the power of good. They saw enough to know that this is God's world, that evil must fail at last, that there must be a Judge of all the earth, and that he must do right.

* Ecclus. xxxviii.

Can we read their writings in a like faith, and dispense with the additions of a later theology? They saw all their friends go, one by one, into the earth, from which they had been taken; and with an implied belief in the soul, they consigned them to the shades of *Sheol*, where in rest, in dreamless or busy sleep they spent the long night of the grave. They did not invent monstrous rules of impossible punishments. They left all that in its native darkness. I have merely skimmed the surface of the Hebrew Bible, to show the general grounds of what I have asserted—that the hell of our common divinity is not found in the Old Testament. If I am right in my notion of the relations of the two Covenants, it ought not to be found there. The genius of that old learning appears before us like the father of the faithful, pleading with God, as man with man, and asking, what each man of us must answer for himself, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

For one, I find nothing there to check the thought of the poet:

> "Between the dreadful cherubim,
> A Father's love I still discern!
> As Moses looked of old on him,
> And saw his glory into goodness turn!

"For he is merciful as just;
And so by faith correcting sight,
I bow before his will, and trust,
Howe'er they seem, he doeth all things right.

"And dare to hope that he will make
The rugged smooth, the doubtful plain;
His mercy never quite forsake;
His healing visit every realm of pain."

VI.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.*

JUDE, vii.—Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

I TAKE this text as the strongest and severest in its tone, in the direction to which I have been directing your thoughts, of any in the Bible. The short epistle of Jude leaves us little regret that it did not come in his way to write more. I accept his few words as true and of authority. They are strangely imitative of the fiercest mood of Peter, and show us that this man Jude was by nature of the sternest and most ascetic temper. I take it for granted, from his style, that if there had been anything further to be said in this direction, he would certainly have said it. So that giving to this text every shade of inspired authority, short of the words of Christ himself, we have the

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severest symbol of the hell of the New Testament that can be had. I say, short of the words of Christ, for I hold in this case, as in all others, that, if the words of Christ on any subject, are enough to explain any later assertion of his disciples, then we are safe in limiting such words by his previous expressions. Some men seem to think, that the epistles of the New Testament are all of the nature of new and fresh oracular expressions, every part of them dictated directly to the writer. On the other hand, I think of them as largely made up of excellent reasonings, directed by the spirit of Christ, upon the facts, which the men knew and had received from Christ and from the Old Testament. Christ is emphatically the Word of God. His revelation is the *leaven* which was cast into the surrounding lump of human society. It was complete and final. The workings of that great donation in the minds of others is the proper ideal of the true rule of interpretation for all that comes after, except in the few instances where a direct oracular communication is claimed. They commented on that donation, but did not enlarge it. They developed it authoritatively, and in the development they necessarily mingled more or less of their own personalities. Thus, I do not look on St. Jude as inspired to

add anything to this subject of future punishment, but as speaking out, under the influence of "the Mind of Christ," what was deducible from what had been said already. So that he gives us not only the idea of his age, which any one could have done, but, of the inspired thought of his time, as to what Christ had taught, which he could do as one of the apostles. In presenting to you the New Testament doctrine on the condition of souls after death, I must rush rapidly from point to point.

The cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, were a terrible example to the Old World of the crimes to which the Old World was especially open—the crimes which follow sensuality and lust. The first crime of the savage is murder. This is exemplified in Cain. The next crime is profane rebellion against law; this has its mournful story in the building and confusion of Babel. But of all the lessons read to the old and savage world, none has the terseness, simplicity, and terrible force of the story of the Sin of Sodom. It is the crime that accompanies the advance of civilization, and retards and checks its progress. The plain of Sodom was as Eden, and as the garden of the Lord for fertility and softer beauty. There in the purple evening of one fatal day, the corrup-

tion of its inhabitants culminated in the gravest of crimes known to mankind. Every idea of decency and of the solemn rites of hospitality had vanished, as poor, old, ease-loving Lot read the tragic meaning of that *triste noche.* The morning sun rose on the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions from the asphaltum beds, beneath the fated cities, and soon the sullen waters of the Dead Sea rolled heavily over the sunken homes, where men had given themselves over to "fornication and going after strange flesh." I claim two things for this event of the curse of Sodom:

I. That it was natural. I mean by that only that it was consonant to our ideas of natural justice.

II. That it was a vast mercy, rich in blessing to other men in the way it was used in the Bible. Blessed be the man who can even burn out a cancer, when other and milder medicines have failed. And then twice blessed be he who can by his own well-timed suffering show the afflicted everywhere how to do it. One is reconciled to the naturalness of the destruction of Pompeii, as he sees the vile character of the people who were smothered in those ashes. So too, one has only to study the work of the cool and scientific Gibbon, to know that the horrors of the fall of Imperial Rome were a part of the old law of "the survival of the fittest."

And so the dark, deep caldron of the sea of Usdum lies in the world's history as the solemn monitor to all men of the results of crime, when God awakes to judge the earth. No one can look down on its gloomy and silent vale and not feel the wholesome lesson of its destruction. The rest of the world was in every way better off without the cities of the plain. The rest of the world cannot yet spare the sea of salt. It was natural for St. Jude to use it as he did. I ask you now to note exactly how he did use it.

I. He says they were corrupted; "they gave themselves over to fornication, and sodomy." Nature itself sets on fire "the course of nature" of every wretch now who does the same. Blackwell's Island can tell you to a tone of every scream and howl that rose on that fatal night from Admah and Zeboim. It is the best thing for some people to die, no matter what follows death.

II. St. Jude says that God made them *an example;* "they are set forth for an example." Good physicians treat men of woe cheerfully, without fee, that they may have them for clinical examples, and we thank them for it. God wrote this law of his, in fire and brimstone, in storm and tempest, in order that the grossest and stupidest of his scholars might read and understand it.

III. Jude says, "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." And this use of the word may show us the true use of the phrase in the Bible. For it is unquestioned that the people of Gomorrah died natural deaths; died at once, as soon as their physical tissues were put properly in contact with the blue flames of that horrid caldron. The inhabitants were *burned up.* Men have fancied that they could see the ruins of the cities which were destroyed, under the surface of the Dead Sea, but no one ever yet has dreamed that the actual people were there still, suffering from the same flames. The fire was for a day. It was like any other volcanic eruption, only adopted by a beneficent Providence for a purpose; it has been cooled off long ages ago. That the inhabitants should have been destroyed, by that or any volcanic eruption, is perfectly natural; is in perfect harmony with our knowledge of the creation. The God of nature does not spare the guilty. We all live by this rule. Science takes no alarm, and human justice receives no shock, when Lisbon goes under in an awful earthquake, or London is smitten with a destructive plague, or when, nearer home, we hear of a vessel lost at Kittyhawk, or a train burned at Ashtabula Bridge. But who can tell how this other idea, begotten of paganism and false science,

first pushed itself into the Christian scheme of telling of a loving God? the idea of Lisbonites always sinking in an earthquake: the idea of Londoners always wrestling in the agonies of the black tongue: of women and children shrieking everlastingly in the terrors of a perpetuated shipwreck, or common railway travelers always burning at Ashtabula, or in the oil train at New Hamburgh? No one here believes that St. Jude thought that the fire of Sodom was burning in any possible sense in his day. When he said "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," he knew that the fire had long before gone out. The adjective *eternal*, as he used it, must not be taken at hazard as we use it, for it makes him speak foolishness. He evidently holds up the terrors of this instance as a warning to common people, and must have expected them to understand him, as speaking common sense. The fire by which Sodom perished was, as they knew, not eternal, but the ordinary flames of sulphur and bitumen, and the more short-lived for their fierceness. It is evident that he transferred the idea of eternal to the *finality of the fate*, or, as we may say, to *its thoroughness*. They were destroyed by fire. It was in vengeance, such vengeance as nature takes; in this case used and pointed by the sacred hand, that was writing letters on the eternal

wall for all men to see. It was final and it was sufficient, in the case of Sodom.

The law which was represented in that instance *endures through all the ages to the end*—and so is eternal—the law, that all things which fail and corrupt themselves shall die and be burned up, to make room for others. It is the law of the earth itself. If it "bring forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, it receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers, rejected and nigh to cursing, its end is to be burned," * not everlastingly tormented, but cleansed, burned over, and taught by the process how to bear fruitful plants. It is this doctrine of "eternal judgment" that is illustrated by St. Paul, and we have the right to urge all the suggestions of his illustration. God himself in all nature is "a consuming fire" [πῦρ καταναλίσκον, Sept. for אֹכֶלֶת, Lev. vi. 10; Deut. iv. 24. It signifies to *consume wholly*], as Moses had said (Deut. iv. 24), and Paul after him (Heb. vi. 29). In this sense "the eternal fire" is used by St. Jude. It is the fire "of the ages," the perpetual law of mercy to the good.

So when Christ says, the fire is not quenched in the vale of Gehenna, he does *not* say, that the filth of any one day's offal is always enduring and al-

* Heb. vi. 7, 8.

ways burning. The fire does its work, is always doing its proper work, it burns up all that comes. It is always sufficient to do this; and this is a natural, and I maintain against all objectors that this is a blessed work—a merciful work—God's own good work, as shown in all the kingdoms of nature. When Christ says, "the worm never dies," it is not said of the individual worm in the decaying flesh of one dead body, and far less is it said, that the decaying flesh of any one sinner never dies; but, what any Southern man well knows, certainly one who comes from a State where they put a fine on the shooting of a vulture, the race never fails; it is always sufficient for any amount of work. In other words, granting the law of selection, for the moment, the two meanings of the language of Jesus naturally lie between the assertion of the enduring sufficiency of the powers of destruction to remove everything that offends, and the unnatural and monstrous transfer of the notion of perpetuated life to the dead and corrupting masses of filth, which the fire and the worm are set to remove.

But, says one, "the soul is immortal, and hence the suffering is eternal." I answer, that is philosophy,* and not scriptural interpretation. It

* Two words are used in the New Testament which are translated *immortality*: ἀθανασία, *un-dyingness* (used three times: 1 Cor. xv.

is arbitrary logic applied to poetry. It is a carpenter's foot-rule used to measure the spiritual kingdom of God. If Christ anywhere says: 'the souls of men are subjected perpetually to fires that burn souls, and to worms that feed on thoughts and gnaw on consciences,' then I will hold to his dictum, and bow my mind to mysteries of horror which have no solution in human thought or in nature. For I have said already, that I will go to the utmost extent of his words, and no farther. It has been my aim to clear away all

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53, 54, and 1 Tim. vi. 16); and ἀφθαρσία, *incorruptibleness* (used eight times: Rom. ii. 7; 1 Cor. xv. 42, 50, 53, 54; Eph. vi. 24; 2 Tim. i. 10; Titus, ii. 7; or used six times for the divine communication of undyingness to the bodies of the saints alone, as opposed to a natural, corrupted condition—and twice in an indirect meaning for *sincerity*). In the whole English Bible the word *immortality* occurs but five times (Rom. ii. 7; 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54; 1 Tim. vi. 16; 2 Tim. i. 10). In all these cases the language applies to the *righteous only*, and *exclusively* to them, save in that one remarkable assertion of St. Paul, that God "only hath immortality," of his own right. *It is not used of the lost. It cannot* be so used. Now, 1. I am aware of the force of the corresponding word "eternal life," and, 2. I am not disposed just here to moot the question of the resurrection or the immortality of the lost, but I state these facts of revelation, as justifying me in the assertion that the objection cited is made by philosophy against revelation; or rather perhaps by philosophy assuming the high probability of such immortality of the lost (as to their souls alone, not of their *bodies*—of which philosophy knows nothing) and imposing a meaning against the ordinary working of nature on the text of Scripture. "Unde resurrectio simpliciter loquendo, *est miraculosa non naturalis* nisi secundum quid, ut ex dictis patet."—*Aquinas*, Par. 3d, quest. 76, vol. iv., p. 1273.

side issues from this one point, for it is the one critical point of all others. If any one conscientiously can see no way to escape from this transfer of the everlastingness from the fire to the subject, I cannot say him nay. I am in the valley of the shadow. I decline however myself to make the transfer while there is any intelligent method of avoiding it.

But in this thing we have long enough followed the dogmas of Augustine and Calvin, and the sublime classics of Dante and Milton, as infallible. It is time to go back to the words of Christ and clarify them of all later additions. He has to my mind asserted the sufficiency of the causes of death to remove all that is corrupted and all that offends. In the sense of that *power* it is all-enduring. The race of the worms will not die out, the fires of essential purification will not be quenched while the world lasts. The air that moves up from the gloomy vale of Gehenna will always rise pure and sweet to the children of God. Yea, "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be *burned up*."* Why? That "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," may appear, as the solution of every enigma.

I pass this just here, for the present. I have

* 2 Pet. iii. 10, *κατακαίω*.

shown, that in this place of Jude's epistle, which is often used to assert the endless supernaturalness of fire, whether material or spiritual, to keep alive souls or bodies, it is plain that he is not so to be taken. I pass to one or two passages where the same use of the word eternal is made by other apostles. In Romans, ch. xvi. 25, St. Paul has these words: "the mystery, which was before the world began." We open the Greek Testament, and it is there—χρονοις αιωνιοις σεσιγῆμενου. It is "the mystery kept silent *for* or *through* eternal times." You will notice that the translators did not give it literally. They could not do it and make sense of it in English, for there is no such thing as eternal times. It means just what they say—before the world began. It is only a general phrase to tell us, that the doctrine in question had never been revealed to mankind. But some one suggests, 'it has been kept silent for all past eternity, and so it may mean in other cases, all future eternity.' So then take a case where this idea is cut off. In 2 Tim. i. 9, he speaks of the grace given to us in Christ Jesus—προ χρονων αιωνιων—or *before* eternal times. We should then be obliged to believe of the apostle, that, in his way of using this word, there was a limit in the past, and a time before eternity; which would be

impossible and nonsensical. The apostle, it is sufficient to say, did not use English, and did speak *sense*, so that the translators properly gave it to us as—*before the world began.* Thus we come to the rule in regard to this word, that it is not philosophical, but of common use, and that it is always to be understood by the nature of the cases in which it occurs. In Heb. vi. 2, he ranks the doctrine of *the eternal judgment*, among the credenda of the catechism. God has appointed a day in which to judge the world. For one I hope that he will keep us all to the appointment. We may all say devoutly with David, " Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." I cannot begin to comprehend the history of man or the records of my own conscience, without such a final readjustment and immense universal compensation. From graves of myriads of failures and lost lives, of infants, cripples, and idiots, and of insane persons, from Smithfields and St. Bartholomew's, from the Roman amphitheaters, soaked with blood, from land and sea, from souls under the Altar and from souls which never saw an altar, from souls of Calibans hag-engendered and borne to earth in the midst of cruelest discouragements and basest animalism, with hardly a

chance of virtue and decency, and from souls that have imitated the lost archangels and rushed down from the pinnacles of every social and moral advantage, whose very despair has put on the sublime of a late repentance, there comes that cry of St. John, "Lord, how long?" "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come: yea, come, Lord Jesus." I now see Jesus the rider on the white horse, the immaculate Chevalier of the Church, borne down in the fight. I see vice triumphing and virtue peeping and tremulous. I look to see the end, when he shall emerge from the dust and noise of the world-battle at last triumphant, with his name written on his thigh and on his dinted helm—King of kings, and Lord of lords—when with softest songs of epithalamium, the Bride washed from every stain shall summon her maids to meet him in the sky, and all creation shall raise the cry of the Apocalyptic vision, "The marriage of the Lamb has come." "And after these things," said St. John, "I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia: salvation, and honor, and power unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: For he hath judged the great Harlot, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke ascended up forever and ever." I look to see it ascend till the last corrupt thing that offends by its utter evil and baseness, its foulness and malarial stench, its failure and rottenness, its plague and curse, is burned thoroughly up, as honest fire always does burn thoroughly up. When Christ in the splendid picturing of his last public discourse is seen sending the goats into "everlasting fire," I accept the *fire itself* as sufficient, as final, and in that sense *enduring* or eternal. But who shall by his added logic begotten of pagan horror and superstitious science, transfer the everlastingness to the goats? or who on the other hand shall dare say, that it *is not transferred?* We can only stand in our little Zoar if we find one, and look back on the scene of destruction and wonder. It is the world-old doubt. It is "the background of mystery." In old times when men ignorantly believed in animals always existing horribly in the hottest fires: when they superstitiously explained volcanoes as the fiery prisons of Jove, who with terrible vengeance kept his enemies confined in them—it was natural to look beyond the first idea of burning, and fill the fancy with unnatural horrors of perpetuated mystery. We do not have their excuse. Can we not stand still, and listen to the words of

Christ, and stay our roving theories just where he leaves us? And then, for what is beyond, in the far blue depths of eternity, God help me to accept what may be there, when I can better understand what eternity means, to him or for me.

The Bible has use for a word that has in it this double-sidedness. It is for us to say whether we shall be forced, against the best instincts of the heart, against the thought and knowledge of a world, to confuse them. "The eternal power and Godhead," who would ask for a limit to the thought? But the eternal judgment, the eternal condemnation, the everlasting punishment may well be left in the shadow of the word which Scripture has provided. It *is* final. It is sufficient. It covers the times of revelation, from that old date, when the morning stars sang together, till that last hour when the Bright and Morning Star shall step out in the blue depths of a limitless future, to tell us that evil is ended, forever, and as the old Latin words have it, the hymn of glory shall roll on, *in sæcula sæculorum.*

Let me add one word, as to the poetical usage of the last book of the Bible. I have made no allusion to it as an argument; only, by way of illustration. I say, in brief, that I regard that book as a poem, with one great design: namely, to

paint to the imaginations of the first Christians, during the age of pagan persecution, *the pictures* of spiritual facts which should tell them better than prosaic words could do, all the powers which were then at war for their souls. I consider it to have ended, as to its definite prophecies, when pagan Rome fell; it reaches upward in its yearnings of inspired fancy to the day of judgment; it has very little fitness for this controversy. To use it dogmatically, in order to decide the prose facts of this doctrine, would be a great mistake. It would be like taking the splendid dreams of Milton, to settle a law-case of the common courts, or to describe the track of a comet. If the ordinary Augustinian dogma is true, then, we may expect to find the book of Revelation in harmony with it. If the ideas which I have offered you are true, the music of the epic of St. John will not contradict them. But the ideas must be first treated alone and ascertained, before the music is called in, to glorify them. When we wonder what Christ meant in the description of the last judgment, we turn to the scenery of St. John's visions for comparison and illustration. In the last chapters of the Apocalypse, we have the grand scene of the final triumph of Christ. The White Throne and its august Company appear to the mind's eye;

the Books are opened; the sentence that tells the end of evil forever to us is given. The Beasts and the False Prophet, the old Babylonian civilization and idolatry, are cast alive into a Lake of Fire burning with brimstone, and they *perish.* They certainly are *burned up* at once and finally, they do not in the wildest imagination continue to suffer in brimstone and volcanic flames to an endless eternity, but they perish utterly and at once. All men are then being judged according to their works. Then, two monster forms darken the vision for a moment, each a formidable shape, each black as night, fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell; "and *death and hell* [two living monsters, two great macrocosms of human horror] were cast into the lake of fire. This is *the second death.* And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire." This act of the Eternal Judgment closes the story of evil. If we take it as prose, may I ask, If Death and Hell are real beings, and if they suffer forever? Or if they are not rather imaginations of the sublimer kind, and perish then by the fire? If so, why should the others, those not found written in the Book of Life, not perish too? But we have no right to any such critical reasonings about it. It is not prose. The poet used it as a

skillful musician rolls the thunder of a Bourdon double bass on the organ, not that the ear catches, or needs to catch, any exact vibration on the chromatic scale, but that it is thereby prepared for the strain which is to ensue. Thus, as this double CC passes away, the first notes of the endless song of the Lamb come floating in—the new City, and the new Earth, the Holy City—the Bride adorned for her husband, the City without temple, the Bride, without blemish—the Garden of the Lord, the River of Life, the auroral Light and beatific Vision taking the place of sun and moon; no sin, no sorrow more, nothing, but "sacred, high, eternal noon." None that defile, or work abomination, or make a lie shall enter there. *Where are they?* Let us go to the jeweled pavement, where to-day stands the mosque of Omar, and the Church of Justinian, and look off through the cloudless sky to the south. There Abraham once stood in the sublime act of self-sacrifice of his dearest desire, to see Christ's day and be glad—and with great black Oriental eyes, looking to the far future, he will be there with us, to ask again, "*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*" Moses has now crossed the Jordan, and he, who once saw even the terrors and darkness of Sinai, all glorious within, with God's good-

ness and mercy, will stand there with us then. All the redeemed who have saved their souls and become God-like and Christ-like by infinite pity and love unconquerable, will be by our side. Look off then, and see where the thin line of smoke rose yonder in the day of Christ, through the clear air, and if it is there still, ask it what it means. It answers me, "*There is an allotted end of evil. Only God is eternal. Only good shall be everlasting.*" It tells me, that every power that can touch my conscience has been used by Christ, to prove to me, that the good is best—the true is wisest:—that his judgments are everlasting, because they are just. There shall be no more curse; there shall be no more night; *must* we say, there shall still be evil? Are we compelled to say that sin must be eternal, that agonies untold are necessary to the goodness of God forever and ever?

> "While sin remains, and souls in darkness dwell,
> Can heaven itself be heaven, and look unmoved on hell?"

If so, if we must change our higher thoughts of God and Christ—if, driven on by a remorseless, arbitrary logic, we must accept other thoughts, who can fault the poet's prayer, or fail to make it his own?

> "My God, my God! if thither led,
> By thy free grace unmerited,
> No crown nor palm be mine, but let me keep
> A heart that still can feel, and eyes that still can weep."

VII.

THE USE OF THE PRAYER BOOK.*

2 CORINTHIANS, v. 10–11.—For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

THIS text illustrates one feature of the subject of future punishment, which must not be disregarded, which is, the manner in which each one uses it. Granting for the moment, that the severest view is the true one, the question of how a preacher of the Gospel or how a Church is to present it and deal with it, is the question of most importance. It is not to be allowed for a moment, that Christ would have revealed such a future condition to men, and have given them no sufficient indications as to its treatment. Present to two men of differing tempers the substance of this doctrine, and one of them will cause the Gospel to smoke with pitchy eloquence; the other will, on

* Preached in the Church of the Holy Trinity, March 10, 1878.

the whole, come up to the force of the words, but will do it reluctantly, will always stand far inside of the line of severity, and always lean to the side of mercy. In the very form of the translation of this text, we have an illustration of this inclination to better the expression of the Gospel. The word which is here rendered *terror*, with its verb and adjective, occurs in the New Testament one hundred and forty times. It is always translated *fear* or *reverence*, except in three places. In one of these instances, the translator uses the word *terror* only for the sake of euphony, as: *Be not afraid of their terror.** Again, the English spirit of rather excessive loyalty tempted him to put it in: *Rulers are not a terror to good works:* † and here the Calvinistic leaven comes to the surface, *knowing the terror of the Lord.* It is plain that he desired to add a darker shade to the softer word of the Apostle. St. Paul said, Knowing *the fear of the Lord.* He did not say terror, and there is nothing in the verse to indicate anything of terror. *Fear* is a healthy sentiment of the heart; *terror* is the morbid condition, the excess of the emotion. Fear is religious. Terror is superstitious. But it was perfectly natural for that learned Calvinistic divine of the age of James I. to use

* 1 Pet. iii. 14. † Rom. xiii. 3.

the harsher instead of the milder word, as it is perfectly natural now for such men to miss the point of the text, and thinking that they are right, to claim to know the terror of the Lord, and therefore *terrify men*, instead of persuade them, after the wholesome manner of truth. I can comprehend how St. Paul, knowing the fear of Christ, as the one man, who in the form of man is to be the last judge of all men, would persuade us by human argument, and in so doing, could say, that his heart was laid open or "manifest" before God, in the sincerity of his motives, and he hoped, also, laid open to the consciences and understandings of his fellow Christians of Corinth. But I cannot understand any consistency in his style, if he is supposed to be justifying the terror which some force into his words. Emphatically we are all to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. He will come to restore all things as the Son of Man, *i. e.*, as a man. The entire poetry of the various descriptions of the last judgment depend on this representation of *the human nature*, as the circle that contains the motives, the tests, and the sentences of that last scene of trial and judgment. If this is so, then I resist with my whole soul, any dogmas of infinite and inconceivable mysteries, being the rule of that judgment; dogmas that

defy all attempts of human comprehension as to any portion of them. I do not question the divinity of Christ. I do not pretend to ignore the awful possibilities which lie beyond the sentences. I only resist the stupidity which tells me in one moment to praise God that a Son of woman is to judge me, and in the next breath commands me to be silent when I ask, "Shall not the judge of all the earth, shall not the Son of Mary do right?" And if so, must I not now interpret all the metaphors of the subject on some comprehensible theory of human justice? Dogma is seeking now with all its usual arts to evade this issue. But it will fail. It is one of those issues into which the world drifts at times, and when once fairly made, the end of it is certain. The doctrine of eternal punishment, as it lies in the lap of the Man who so loved the whole world as to give his life in order to let all human ideas of tenderness and mercy run limping far behind him, is a dogma, whereby, if we get at it rightly, we are to persuade men on cognizable grounds and motives, not merely terrify them. There are these two ways of dealing with the scriptural thought of the Last Judgment of Christ, which I hold to be somehow comprehensibly *just*, at least: which I hold to be, that punishment, in the end of the world, will

have some sort of relation to the best and truest ideas and examples of the punishments that now exist; that the justice of the Christ then, will be the same as that he has always illustrated here, not in natural law only, but specially in this human life. But, my purpose is to-day, to show you just how this method of treatment is illustrated in the prayer book of this Church. I do not hold the prayer book to be in any way infallible. Nor do I pretend always to confine my ideas of truth to its dictates. No living man does. I shall claim for it, in this discussion, only the authority of a venerable document, which is for us the ordinary guide to sound opinions and pious impulses and affections in doubtful matters. It is our book of sailing-directions, in the voyage of time. Like any almanac or ephemeris, it is full of ancient characters, and some old and obsolete shadowings of things which we love in their place, and keep as the marks of its great age. But the Christian man is always bound to remember that he has no Master nor Rabbi on the earth when his conscience pulls him with the leverage of a hair. Reverence for precedents must always yield to conviction. He is then thrown back on his own conscience and on the illumination of a diviner Spirit in his own conscience, by the very com-

mands of his heavenly Master, Christ. I shall be a little tedious here, but I choose to have you see for yourselves how small, and yet how important a place this subject has in the liturgy. And to do this I must quote the passages in which it occurs:

I. The Litany, "From thy wrath and from everlasting damnation, good Lord deliver us." I only ask you to lift the vulgar meaning off from the word damnation; and I insist that it means, simply, *condemnation* * or judgment, *i. e.*, the act, not the consequences. That, of course, may be in fact all that the other word means, but it did not carry the now vulgar force of it, when it was put into this prayer. Whatever the Bible means by the word, of course the Litany means the same, but it does not add to it.

II. In the first Sunday in Advent, and the fourth Sunday after Trinity we have a passing allusion to the Judgment, praying that "we may rise to the life immortal," and that "we lose not the things eternal," and nowhere else in the public liturgy is it mentioned. Note the fact, for this

* "And Dr. Hammond observes of the Greek κριμα, that according to its origination, it signifies censure, *judgment;* and in its making hath no intimation either of the quality of the offence to which the judgment belongs, or to the judge who inflicts it. He might have added, or of the punishment inflicted."—*Richardson's* Lexicon.

silence is emphatic. Pass outside the Church and listen to the prayers and exhortations of popular preachers, anywhere, and you have at a glance two separate views of how the same subject is capable of being used. This Church certainly framed her liturgy on the idea that she inherits a blessing, not a curse—that she is to educate men to believe in good, and not evil. The latter they learn of themselves.

III. The Catechism tells the children of the Church what they are to believe in regard to the morals of life. It finds in the Lord's Prayer for their instruction, in the phrase, *Deliver us from evil*, that God will "keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from our spiritual enemy, and from everlasting death." Whatever evil signifies in the prayer, it signifies in the comment. *Everlasting death* is surely contained in it, but it goes no whit farther, it stops just there; it does not say "everlasting agony, or endless torment."

IV. Let us hear the words which rise out of the homes of her children at their family prayers: "Imprint upon our hearts *such a dread of thy judgments*, and such a grateful sense of thy goodness to us, as may make us *both afraid and ashamed* to offend thee." Let our "consciences be void of offense toward thee and toward men,

that we may be preserved pure and blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." I claim that this is a healthy fear of the Lord that has healing in it, and which persuades us and our children to gentler thoughts of Christ. It teaches a decent silence. If perchance one has left our home-circle "whose title clear" we are not quite able to read, it soothes rather than corrodes the wound.

V. Let us follow the pastor of a parish to the private scenes of trouble, among sick and guilty people, where the thought of the future must come up and must be directly treated. The Visitation office for the Sick is most emphatically an office for the consolation of the weak. In every word of it, it implies that fear of the Lord by which we persuade men. In the prayer for those troubled in mind or in conscience about their sins, its language is exactly suited to the highest dictates of my reason on this whole subject, as having that sacred silence and half-shadow of which I have spoken. On the bed of sickness lies the penitent man who is writhing with this great fear, that bitter things are written against him in the book of remembrance. He is made to possess his former iniquities. A sense of wrath lies hard upon him, and his soul is full of trouble. Here then is the sensitive nerve laid bare to the eye of the pastor,

and this is the oil which the Church pours in: "O merciful God, who hast written thy holy Word for our learning, that we, through the patience and comfort of thy holy Scriptures, might have hope; give him a right understanding of himself, and of thy threats and promises, that he may neither cast away his confidence in thee, nor place it anywhere but in thee. Break not the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax."

VI. The strongest language which is used anywhere in these sacred offices of the Church is found in the exhortation to those who are condemned to die. It goes to the length of the words of Christ. At first sight it seems to settle the meaning of that language in one way; it quotes as a solemn warning the text: "Go ye accursed into the fire everlasting," and terms it "a dreadful sentence." Later on it calls it "*an endless and unchangeable state.*" But note carefully here: the tenderness and hopefulness which prevail in it all. The minister standing as it were under the gallows, and often standing really there, with one whose sins are as scarlet, is not set there, but to proclaim mercy and hope to all men, and to touch on the theme of God's wrath, but in passing, as he proclaims his pardoning love. The criminal who has been condemned at the bar of man's judg-

ment is exhorted in the same words as the sick member of the church, save that the guilt of his crime is taken for granted, and the lower note of that terrible day is struck, as it should be, to teach him repentance.

VII. In the office of the Ordering of Priests, the bishop warns the candidates to remember *the greatness of the fault and the horrible punishment which will ensue* on their unfaithfulness to the spouse and body of Christ. The language here is too general to come into the argument. The same remark may be made concerning the words in the Order for the Burial of the Dead, "deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death."

VIII. Let us now dwell somewhat on the common usages of the Church in the last rite of all, the burial service; when the man has now passed beyond the reach of human help. To see the point which I would make more clearly, we may take the burial service of the English Church, and then see the temper of the compilers of the American prayer-book in their changes of the language. By the law of England, and by the usage of our Church, this service is to be used over every baptized Christian without distinction, and the minister is not allowed to make his own opinion of

the party the cause of exception, unless the person has died under the ban of excommunication, or has committed suicide. Practically, these two exceptions have vanished from the scene. For the excommunication by the Church is obsolete, as a fact, and the verdict of any jury, that the suicide has been produced by any form of momentary insanity, nullifies the rubric. Practically, as you know, the service is now hardly ever refused to any man. It is sometimes avoided by the minister's taking his prayers from other sources. So that as a matter of fact, the burial service is used almost without exception, by the ministers of the Episcopal Church, over saints and sinners. The English prayer book, in the act of committal directs the minister to say, "Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother," etc. By right of his baptism he reads over him the words, "Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord." In the prayers he gives hearty thanks for all, as for "our brother delivered out of the miseries of this sinful world," and prays in the same breath for the filling up of the number of the elect. And again, it implies the common yearning of the kindly heart, that "this our brother doth rest in hope, and that we may rest with

him, and at last be found acceptable in God's sight." Now this pointed mode of expressing this charitable hope, has been somewhat changed in our prayer book. I remind you, that it has been done under the almost covenant declaration of the compilers of it, that "this Church is far from intending to depart from the Church of England in any essential point of doctrine, discipline, or worship; or further than local circumstances require." Whatever there is in the language which I have quoted, which can be interpreted as *essential* to either doctrine, discipline, or worship, that is certainly the doctrine, discipline, or worship of this Church.* Essentially we are committed to all important ideas of both books. Passing by all other things which may be found in the service, I maintain that we are committed to this one thought: that this Church refuses, in her religious rites, to anticipate in any way the final judgment of any man, who is in this Christian

* Of course the ideas have changed since the actual words are omitted, and have changed for the worse. The older service was constantly a protest against a shallow, meager, and false Protestantism. It testified to an intermediate state, in which all men baptized into the Church remain till the day of judgment. It forbade all presumption as to the conditions of individual souls. It was inconsistent with sectarian dogmatics. The silences of the present service are to be deplored, as allowing other inferences to be made by us.

Brotherhood, and who does not by his own act, or by his enormous guilt, and by ecclesiastical adjudication, put himself out of it. But it is certain, that the Church as a field or net contains all who are to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; the wheat and the tares, the good fish and the bad; as parts of that one flock which is poetically described as either sheep or goats. I—and I suppose every minister of this Church has done it—I have used the burial service over the mortal remains of every sort and grade of character; over Pharisee and publican, spotless women and spotted harlots, saints and sinners; and will continue to do so to the end of my public service.

This then is the actual language and usage of the Book of Common Prayer. There is one other fact about it to be considered, before I am at liberty to draw any inferences from it, and that is the doctrinal record of the Church. In the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, as they stand, there is nothing whatever said of this dogma of future punishment. But in the original Forty-two Articles, the last one had this section: "Thei are worthie of condemnatione [Latin, *damnatione*] who indevoure at this time to restore the dangerouse opinion, that al menne, be thei never so ungodlie, shall at length bee saved, when thei have suffered

paines for their sinnes a certaine time appoincted by Goddes justice." The Forty-two Articles were issued in 1552, apparently by the King's Council—not by the bishops and clergy. This one was pointed at the Anabaptists of the reign of Edward VI., and was taken from the Augsburgh Confession. It was omitted at the next revision of 1562, and has never been re-enacted. The only argument that I propose to draw from the fact is, that the Church, when she had time to reflect calmly on the subject, deliberately chose to say nothing about it. I think it probable that the Church of England, or our own Episcopal Church, if called on now to make any assertion, would be found on the side of the Article as it was. If I hesitated to subscribe it, it would be only that I know not, for certain, all that one should know to make it an Article of authority. The Privy Council of England, a few years ago, in the course of an ecclesiastical trial, had this subject before them, and gave it their careful attention. The decision was: "We do not find in the formularies any such distinct declaration of our Church upon the subject, as to require us to condemn as penal, the expression of hope by a clergyman, that even the ultimate pardon of the wicked, who are condemned in the

day of judgment, may be consistent with the "will of Almighty God." * The two Archbishops of York and Canterbury united in this part of the opinion. This coincides entirely with my proposition of the intentional silence which this Church has maintained on this whole matter. This silence is as positive a fact as anything about her. It is the witness of the manner in which she treats the dogma; and of the spirit in which she would have her preachers treat it.

I can now give you my inferences, from all these facts of the liturgic usage. Take them, I pray you, only as my inferences. The next man whom you listen to, may infer just the contrary. They stand on no authority but that of fact and verisimilitude.

I. *The prayer book has no theory about Hell.* It uses the word only to tell us that Christ went there; that is, "to the place of departed spirits." It propounds nothing about future punishment, beyond the use of certain scriptural language. If you are satisfied of the meaning of the scriptural words, then to you, of course, those words in the prayer book signify just what they do in the older book. I am free to allow that the majority of the clergy of the Church have adopted the harsher views,

* *See Six Privy Council Judgments*, p. 102.

which have prevailed in all sects of the Church, since the days of Augustine; and that such views are held by the majority of the popular sects of to-day. With many persons that sort of unthinking, general consent decides most matters. I am so constituted and have been so trained, that it cannot decide them for me. All truth must at some stage of it *assert itself.* If truth lives, it can do so. If it cannot do it, then it is so far dead. My mind rises up in hopeless resistancy, at any mere authority, until the arguments for it are sustained by so much evidence as the case allows. For good or ill, I hear Christ saying to me, "Call no man Rabbi, on the earth." Passing then all other questions about those words, he surely tells me, that he is willing to trust his Gospel to the higher reason of his children. The half-shadow, that his Word and his Church have left on the details of the last judgment and on its issues, appeals to the best sense that I am possessed of. I am not sorry, that the authorities of Edward VI. should have yielded to the pressure of 1552, and inserted a passage as to the details of the last judgment, for it gave the divines of Elizabeth the opportunity to erase it promptly and exhibit the truer instinct. Every sort of influence has since been brought to bear on the Church, to force her to de-

part from this moderation and silence, and failed. It is her glory, or it is her shame, according as you look at it.

II. No one can examine the citations which I have offered and not be convinced, that the book is on the side of the finality, the thoroughness, and the sufficiency of the justice of God. The Church is womanly, rather than masculine. She has the feminine trait, to exert all the ingenuity that a maternal instinct and a sister's tact can use, to find out how to lean always to the side of mercy. The prayer book is to many men a stumbling-block, because of the two elements in it; one of the masculinities of monks and lean divines, who had been better often as monks; the other of the softer elements of that charity that droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven, and which asserts its own claims, by its being at all. Given the intellect in excess, and the Articles will suffice to build up again some of the dogmatic palaces or fortresses, in which men have reveled or fought in old times. They will suffice, too, for the Miltonic substructures, where the doors on their horrid hinges "*grate harsh thunder.*" On the other hand, given, what I shall call a full-blooded and rich-hearted humanity, and the liturgic portions of the service will fascinate the mind, and will repu-

diate with more or less aversion, the other methods. Which is best? Which will prevail in the end? The book leaves it to the end to reply.

III. The use of the burial service tests for us certain things in this whole matter. The test is a severe one. In the last thirty years of ministry, I have heard one single man, a Methodist minister, tell the assembly of friends at a funeral, that while he was preaching to them, the person, for whom they had been called together, was in the midst of hell-torments. He enlarged on it with frightful plainness, and logically proved his points from his premises. I felt then, despite of the horror of it, and I feel now, that on their common premises, he was doing what ought to be done. Gehenna in Scripture lies altogether on the other side of the day of judgment. But men kindle its flames at death, and define its chief details as now existing. What is it then that prevents preachers universally from the bluntness of the Methodist, that I heard? or again, what is the drift of communities, that hold to these details, and hesitate at the legitimate conclusions from them? During my ministry I have heard more sneers at the common funeral discourses of the age, than at all other Christian matters put together. Every one of you has heard them, yea, and probably sympathized with them.

It explains the growing distaste in the community for any words, at a funeral, except the burial service. Yea, it is that thing in the burial service, that is *felt* to be desirable, by all classes of the community. Take an illustration. Imagine, that I could convince any family here in this assembly, the next time we meet around the coffin of a young girl, that she has been taken to the volcano Kilauea, and submerged a thousand fathoms deep in the eight-mile caldron there of liquid lava, and subjected to the foul, obscene embraces and insults, and the tearing talons of the vilest fiends, day and night, in horrors inconceivable, while Christ was all the time looking on and smiling down from the crater's top in divinest satisfaction; while gentle angels were passing between your infants of election and that pit's mouth, and waking in you the sanctities of perfectest tenderness; tuning their voices over it to a higher song of praise to the King of kings, who proposes to make his royal title known, in telling and convincing us how tender of his creatures the great God is. Why not? Why! I confess, that I enjoyed a throb of new love toward God, when I read in Livingstone's travels, how under the paw of a lion, about to kill him, he suddenly discovered a new law of death; discovered, that a dazing of the whole ner-

vous life in his body, like a mental anæsthetic, occurred, and he looked up to the savage beast over him, with pleased and satisfied serenity. I tell you, that the world has drifted out of our control, in this old Dante picturing, and that however we may lament the necessity, we must surrender the machinery, which has been built up around this subject. Believing as I have always done, that both final states of men are left till after the resurrection, and that God does not play the part of sending either saints or sinners to their fates, in order to bring them back again and enact an improbable scene of appearing only to judge them, I can, and I choose to read this burial service in trust that he will do justice then, as I know that he always does it now. No amount of monkish interpretation or of Calvinistic logic can incline us to really believe, that he will judge us at the last, by any other rule of justice, than that which he has used in judging us, and commended to us, here and now. Let us trust him for that day, and leave this matter in the half-shadow, where religion and nature, where revelation no less than science properly leave it. The last punishment will be final, thorough, and sufficient. The rest will be, as all other things in the mind of Christ have already shown themselves to be, conceived

and finished in a mercy, that transcends our highest dreams. For one, I am compelled to give in my sympathy for all that prompts men to

> "trust that good will fall
> At last—far off—at last, to all,
> And every winter change to spring.
>
> "So runs my dream: but what am I?
> An infant crying in the night:
> An infant crying for the light:
> And with no language but a cry."

VIII.

THE APPEAL TO CONSCIENCE.*

2 PETER, iii. 14.—Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless. And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.

THE "*such things*" in this text, which Christians were supposed to be looking for, are specified by the writer. They were *the last things.* We have, in this passage, the Apostle St. Peter, proposing the proper subject to which I promised to call your attention, in this last discourse on the doctrine of future punishment, namely, its leverage on the human heart, or in other words, its use as an element in the education of a religious conscience. I have refused to have any definite opinion on many of the propositions of the common creed about the place and kind of punishment at the last. I have asserted my right, in this church, to hold these things in a half-shadow; at the hither side of it, seeing the light go out,

* Preached in the Church of the Holy Trinity, March 10, 1878.

in the words of Christ, and on the farther side, stating that I do not believe the words *eternal* and the like to be used in the Bible in the philosophical sense at all, and that I have no faculties by which to believe in the absolute eternity of evil. As far as philosophy, science, and the interpretation of language about a future eternity are concerned, the whole question might be left entirely to the abstractions of the closet, and the meditations of the scholar. Its sensitive side is just now the tremulous fear, in the minds of common Christians, lest we may lose some fulcrum by which we are required to move the sinners of the world to recognize the penal consequences of sin. I am therefore bound, as I look at it, to assert in plain terms, three things:

I. That I believe, that the final punishment of the wicked is to be final, thorough, and sufficient. This I have been doing in all that I have said.

II. That I refuse to have any opinion, or to express any belief beyond the words of Christ, when regarded as belonging to the region of poetry, or if you like the word better, of parable, or of symbolical or representative teaching. I have said, that I hold the real revelation of this subject to be properly confined to him alone; and that the after writers have only commented on or enlarged on

his expressions, according to the poetry, science, and philosophy of their age.

III. I repeat, that I think the expressions of Christ were left in a *half-shadow*, and that when stripped of the poetry, from which the Augustinian spirit deduces the system of the harsher sort, they amount simply to intimations of the thoroughness, the finality, and the sufficiency of the justice of God. I have reiterated this in rather strong language; because, on the one side, the testimony of all nature teaches us a certain set of ideas of justice, which in my judgment, the Scriptures appeal to, and in point of fact, must appeal to, without hesitation or reserve. Making the appeal, they are bound by it. We stand on the edge of the infinite dark, and look off into the blackness that no man hath penetrated, or can penetrate, and we hear the call of a Voice from beyond: "If you would know what God is, go to Christ alone, who finally revealed him." It will not do to halt here, and because, in our opinion, some moral results beyond the common expectation may possibly follow the exercise of the highest reason, to tie up our judgments at the car of any human device.

Here many good Christians are disposed to raise the cry of poor Burns,

> "The fear of hell's the hangman's whip
> To hold the wretch in order."

They are honestly afraid that we shall lose some real and necessary moral force and medicament out of the sacred pharmacy. I claim the like charity for the wretched. We must hold the wretch in order, if we can. In the fear of Christ and of his final judgment, we must in the exercise of a sound discretion, not only persuade men, but present to them the motives of perfect justice, as an attribute of the Son of Man, as those motives are created by either the teachings or the example of Christ. And to that duty of showing that I do not lose any force, which reason or Scripture gives us, I would now address myself.

The subject then to-day is simply this. Given two ideas of future punishment as possible, which will have the more force in the Christian faith for regulating the balance of the conscience; not only for restraining in due limits the vicious and outrageous, but also for making a believer tender, loving, kind, long-suffering, like Christ, and so godlike, or godly, rising up to the sublimest heights of the love which casteth out fear: *one*, the personal conviction that every man whose title clear he cannot read, is in the endless hell, that Spurgeon preaches;*

* I select his teaching, as, on the whole, the most realistic, although the coarsest. It has this single advantage over the other

or the other, the half-shadow instinct, rather than opinion, that the Creator, the Jehovah, the Son of Mary, the Judge of all the earth, who is to judge pagan and Christian, Grebo and Spurgeon, the isolated scholar poring over his jots and tittles, in the loftiness of accurate Grecisms, and the flat-headed, low-browed, back-alley scrub and news-boy, and the dullest Topsy, by some general idea of self-evident justice, which asks no leave to be, of scholar or sinner, but asserts itself?

Now you perceive that I am open apparently to the charge of changing the ground of the question. This last, you will say, is really how to balance the Christian conscience, not the sinner's. But it is exactly here that the difficulty and the confusion begin. The real method of restraining the bad is by elevating the good. Our Lord has in many ways given us this rule, as when he said to his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." The light does not regulate things by its shadows, or by the dark dazzlings of the eye, but by its shining. The Bible is not the treasury of the

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and more frightful conceit of a supernatural and inconceivable spiritual fire, that it shocks us into a thorough appreciation of the real evil of the other system—the idea which it gives us of Christ, and of God as revealed by him. The real terror is at last not in the degree of pain in the subject who suffers, but in the thought of the Ruler who inflicts the suffering.

police wisdom of the world. The Church is not the appointed "terror to evil-doers," but the State. And when I try to get at the proposition of how to regulate the consciences of men by the powers of fear, I am puzzled to reconcile the general questions that start up in the path. Let us look at them apart.

And, first, on the side of philosophy and fact. Does the fear of hell demonstrate to our reason its claims to be the true balance-wheel of our religion in the war of the passions and appetites? * I

* The following testimony of the Rev. R. Suffield was offered at a meeting held in Zion College in 1873, and afterward committed to writing:

"My extensive experience for twenty years as confessor to thousands, whilst apostolic missionary in most of the large towns of England, in many portions of Ireland, in part of Scotland, and also in France, is, that excepting instances I could count on my fingers, the dogma of hell, though firmly believed in by English and Irish Roman Catholics, did no moral or spiritual good, but rather the reverse. It never affected the right persons; it frightened, nay tortured, innocent young women and virtuous boys; it drove men and women into superstitious practices, which all here would lament. It appealed to the lowest motives and the lowest characters; not, however, to deter them from vice, but to make them the willing subjects of sad and often puerile superstitions. *It never (excepting in the worst cases) deterred from the commission of sin.* It caused unceasing mental and moral difficulties, lowered the idea of God, and drove devout persons from the God of hell to Mary. When a Catholic, I on different occasions conferred on this subject with thoughtful friends among the clergy, who agreed with me in noticing and deploring the same results. From the fear of hell we never expected virtue or high motives, or a noble

have quoted Robert Burns. He lived in the thick throng of Scotch Calvinists, the bravest, the most logical, the most unsparing and outspoken witnesses to this dogma that the world has ever had. You have all seen that engraving of John Knox preaching before Queen Mary, in which the black-robed preacher appears stretching himself over the pulpit in the excess of his fiery zeal, and the queen, clothed in white, sits below, half drawn away, as if on the point of flying in terror from the chapel. The dark figure is in the position of a falcon in full flight swooping down on a helpless, white bird. Such were the preachers of the age of Burns, fearless, remorseless birds of Jove, wielding the bolts of the wrath of God with sublime courage and tremendous force and skill. Burns was thoroughly instructed in their system, as he shows in many ways. He was a wretch in his own sense, in spite of it, or as some would say, in the

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life ; but we practically found it useless as a deterrent. It always influenced the wrong people and in the wrong way. It caused 'infidelity' to some, 'temptations' to others, and misery without virtue to most. The Roman Catholics are very sincere and 'real ;' and we found it difficult to avoid violating the conscience, when we told them to love and revere a God compromised to the creation of a hell of eternal wretchedness, a God preparing what would be scorned as horrible by the most cruel, revengeful, and unjust tyrant on earth."—*Life in Christ*, by Edward White, Preface, 3d edition.

reaction from it. I have the opinion, and I give it only as an impression, that the system in question is calculated to drive those whom it does not command by its tremendous logic, into such sternness of opposition, that the conscience is perverted to do service on the side of evil. I have always looked on Aaron Burr as having in him something of the dregs of the system of his grandfather, Jonathan Edwards, in such wise, that I should not judge the one man without thinking of the other. I do not think that the system of Calvinism can be cited to demonstrate the necessity of any of its peculiarities, and certainly not as able to restrain the excesses of the vicious.*

II. I call your attention to another sort of fact; that almost all Christian nations cannot be cited on the adverse side. Take the Roman Catholics as an illustration. They believe in the material fires of Dante. But they have an allevia-

* Let me do Burns justice, by another quotation:

—"When to all the evil of misfortune
This sting is added—'Blame thy foolish self!'
Or worser far, the pangs of keen remorse;
The torturing, gnawing consciousness of guilt—
Of guilt, perhaps, where we've involvéd others;
The young, the innocent, who fondly loved us,
Nay, more, that very love their cause of ruin!
O burning hell! in all thy store of torments
There's not a keener lash!"

tion which is of the utmost consequence, in the idea of purgatory. Now, dropping out accidental matters and side questions, purgatory is the assertion of a faith, that God in the Church metes out every man's punishment, after death, by the rule, which I have stated all along, of suiting it to his deeds. Now and then, a man may be open in their opinion, to the direct descent into the unchangeable infernal, but you can easily see, that the chance of doubt, for the majority of baptized persons, is of the last importance in educating the conscience. Catholic families cannot know the awful suggestions which our system compels, except very rarely.

Now, it follows from this, that the civilization of the world, so far, has not been owing in any great degree, to anything more than the thought, common to most practical Christians of all names, that the Judge of all the earth will do right. When we advance beyond that, we are not at liberty to forget the influences of the chance of future change, or of annihilation, of metempsychosis, or some other theory, by which the vast majority of men have refused to be impaled on the bare points of our orthodoxy.

III. But I choose rather to decide my own mind by the treatment of the whole subject in the

New Testament. Let us look at the text. St. Peter has his mind pointed to this very matter, the influence which the last judgment has on the conscience. He believed, that the *long-suffering of God*, as leading every sinner to repentance, was the legitimate theme of his discourse. He gives us a specimen of his treatment. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night (*i. e.*, suddenly, unexpectedly), in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat: the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" These are the last things, the great fire, in which all material things shall be dissolved, burnt up, and vanish away. I point you to the fact, that he is here exhorting *not sinners* outside to leave their gross and sensual sins and come to the beginning of a holy life; but he is writing to sinners within, the "beloved" brethren of the Church. In other words, he uses the last things for those who are not wretches, for those

who have already in some measure left the fear of hell as a place of personal thought behind them. He says: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless. And account the long-suffering of our Lord, salvation." His beloved brother Paul taught the same doctrine. He contrasts with the fear of God's judgment, as taught by the heathen, the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering. He asserts that they did not know, that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. In both these cases it is not the wrath, but the mercies of God, which affect the conscience. In both of these instances, there is a marked absence of the warnings of the eternity of evil. In each, we should, in the taste of this age, look for mention of hell and endlessness of torment. It is not found in either of them. But there is, what each apostle thought enough. Each betrays, what is the secret leverage of his own conscience, and each says, what I do not for a moment doubt, is the real Christ-thought of the Gospel—the love of God, the chief motive-power of the conscience, is balanced by

the certainty of every man's receiving according to his deeds—to the seekers after immortality; eternal life: but indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon the soul of every man that doeth evil.* Or as Peter has it: True men are found looking for the last fire to burn up this world, in order to make room for another new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

I have already claimed that the same thought runs through all the Saviour's teachings concerning Gehenna. He uses it to stimulate the noblest courage that the martyrs of the world have illustrated. He uses it as the law of the survival of the fittest, just as the scientific mind might do now; the certainty that every sin and transgression will have its exact and due recompense of reward. The moment, by any artful and artificial introduction of the powers of mystery, you substitute the notion of arbitrary recompense, as Augustine did by his fancies of imputed righteousness on the one side, and of Adam's sin made over to all men in infinite reduplications on the other, you are really substituting the influence of superstition and mystery, where Christ left the

* Rom. ii. 4–10.

healthy play of the reason and the suggestions of a sound conscience. Personally, I confess that I do not remember that I have ever avoided a temptation in my life, because of the arbitrary and mysterious portion of the penalties of the future. I do not remember either myself or any Christian person who may have consulted me, to have been specially exercised on the eternity of hell-torments, as a motive-power to follow after godliness and edification. On the other hand, I have often betrayed the sentiment, that the amount of terror that has crept into preaching has removed the healthy poise of the common conscience, and put our piety in great jeopardy. In all other experiences of God, that we have, there is the certain consequence of a due recompense of reward, when one takes in the whole of both worlds. I have never committed a sin in my life that has not found me out, by either some penalty or the loss of some higher possession. And in the healthy conscience, the certainty of the supremacy of goodness always acts as the magnetism of the far-off spot in the skies acts upon the needle in the compass of the mariner. Magnetic storms sweep fearfully over us all at times, and the needle of the conscience trembles and wavers off from its healthy center. During these excitements we see

other strange barks fleeing hither and thither, and the unwise mariners would exalt the merit of the storms. But they pass. The vessels that ride out the tempests and keep nearest the track of the great Pilot are those over whose compass is written the words: "Perfect love casteth out fear, for fear hath torment." Fear is a disease. It was to be the Great Physician to heal this disease, and to call men back from wandering among the tombs and from the society of ghosts and ghouls, that Christ came to dwell among men.

Now there is another side to this subject. The power that holds back the criminals of the race from vice is the justice of government. The justice of government is always seen in proportioning the penalty to the crimes. We allow a judge to increase the mercies of the law when a case may justify him in doing so, for we are Christians. Often pity is allowed to temper the letter of justice. But we do not, as Christians, permit him to add to the penalty beyond the law. That is tyranny, and is hateful to every law-abiding man. In one community, the penalty halts after the crime, is doubtful, is long delayed, is avoidable by accidents, by political favoritism, or by corruption. In another State the law is swift, certain, and just. It is that which holds the guilty in order. But it

is in no sense the abstract notion of the far-off duration of suffering.

There is another thought which suggests itself just here. Take it for granted, if you please, that the mechanical theories of material fire, and endless supernatural revivifying of the lost for purposes of punishment only, is allowable, for the restraint of the vicious members of society. Look at what we pay for it. The unchangeableness of the soul at and after death, which we consider as absolutely certain, is the one thing which has never been considered as fixed in any theology on earth, until these later ages. We now are keeping all the harsher portions of the older systems, and giving up that which made them tolerable. There is the play, therefore, of desperation in our later system, which maddens, rather than heals the wounds of guilt. Men turn against the Church, and say: "You threaten us with the ultimatum of horrors unless we profess certain sets of ideas, and perform certain acts of symbol with you. Our characters, you tell us, have no sort of force in the scale. You believers are imperfect in the mart, in the assembly, in the home or in society, in the theater or in the street. We know no visible difference between you and us. You are good men, you are honest men. But on your own

showing there is, in things that are seen, no radical difference between us. The difference is purely mysterious and disputed among you. Some of you say that the rites and the sacraments are miraculous, and that they make the difference. Some of you say that the act of a spasmodic conversion creates the character over again, and is a substitute for all else. We see you to be like ourselves, imperfect and unfinished. We will wait the issue, and we can do so and enjoy life very much as you do with us." This is the practical skepticism of the day, and we must all bear our responsibility for its existence. So then I argue that the idea of the common system in regard to hell-torments has not, as a matter of right or of fact, restrained the vicious, and that it has left the world to drift away from the Church, has substituted mystery for character, and has failed to commend the Gospel to the reason of the age.

Let me now summarily give my own belief, as it has been set forth in these sermons.

I. Negatively. I do not believe that the doctrine of hell is found in the Old Testament. It may be true, none the less, only it is not found there. It came in originally into the Jewish mind from the heathen world, from the Persian dualism, and the Greek poetry. Homer and Zoroaster had

far more to do with the scenery of it than Isaiah or Daniel. Light and immortality were first brought to light in the Gospel, and with them the opposites; Gehenna and the second Death.

II. I do not believe, in common with almost all systems of true Catholic theology, that the soul of the righteous man goes to heaven at death, or that the soul of the wicked man goes to hell at death. Inferring all that is fair from the words of Christ to the dying robber, I suppose that the soul of a good man goes to Paradise; and I believe—using the word in the sense of a high probability—I believe that the saints are in joy and felicity. I remind you here that Archbishop Whately, one of the best doctors of logic and a thoroughly read theologian, believed that they and all souls probably *sleep* till the resurrection. This shows us that at least modesty of statement is permitted in this matter. By the same process of reasoning, I infer from the poetic allegory or Jewish fable of Dives and Lazarus, that the souls of the bad are in misery and great distress. But what the misery was of the man whom Abraham called *son*, and dissuaded from sending to the home of his father on a sacred mission to try and save the souls of his brethren, I confess my utter inability to comprehend, or to reason about. I certainly do not believe them to

be in material-fire, for they have no bodies. Their bodies are in the grave—turning back to dust. Spurgeon is compelled to invent two hells, to get his horrible rhetoric on. My belief stops in the thought that the man who could reason as well as Dives did of his brethren, would be the first to answer the question of Abraham, and confess the right of the Judge of all. I am utterly puzzled at the whole story. How Dives could be so humble and so much like Christ in his mercy for his brethren, and be absolutely and eternally beyond God's pity, I beg leave to say, passes my comprehension. It is one of the things that I must leave to St. Luke to explain—when I see him. If any man pushes me with the scenery of the story, I turn on him the repeated assertions of the Old Testament that the dead do not reason at all nor talk, and the common assertion of the New, that *they sleep*. In all such things, prose is before poetry, and facts before fables.

III. I believe with my whole soul in the necessity and certainty of the judgment. I believe the scenery of it, as revealed in the Bible, to be for good reasons, poetic, representative, or symbolical —and by no means to be accepted as prose dogma. I do not expect to see the members of the Church rising again in the form of sheep or of goats: and

it is only the Church that Christ speaks of in his parable, which I take to be the source of all other visions afterward. I do not look to hear these words, Come ye blessed, and Go ye cursed, as the whole dramatic test of a universe. For every man is to be judged for all the deeds done in the body. While as the pith and point of a pictured word, these sentences cover the vital principle of the general Gospel of Christ, they do no more. And so, by the same rule, I do not in my conscience feel the force which many good men are claiming for the forms of the final sentence as matters of fact to decide these difficulties. As poetry, or representative or symbolic teaching of two kingdoms which have been always preparing for that final judgment and coming to the surface from the beginning of the world: as 'the recompense of the reward,' in the lines of all that has been done of good or ill from the beginning, I can accept them as most true. But I accept no more than they convey to my conscience, and that is the finality,* the thoroughness, and the sufficiency of the last things.

IV. I do not find any faculty in me that makes it

* I use the word *finality* only relatively to our present knowledge, not absolutely of God's plans which are beyond our comprehension, and too mysterious therefore for discussion.

possible for me to reason about the idea of absolute eternity. I know nothing about it. As for saying that I feel any instinct of absolute eternity for myself, and so make a stand on the word, as if my religious conscience compelled me, I do not yearn for any such thing. I rather hesitate at it, whether it is conceivable as a thing to be desired. It might be the ambition of a God, but not of a speck and molecule like me. I might be forgiven for the thought, but hardly for so taking it for settled and fixed in the nature of things, as to give me an argument whereby to condemn a fellow molecule. He that confounds the idea of absolute eternity with our common longing for immortality—which after all is *non-mortality*, the longing of a soul half finished, full of problems half solved, burdened with doubts, penitences, disease, and fears; the yearnings of this *pupa* state, that we may yet take wings and soar into perfect light—has not begun to weigh the meaning of words.

V. I do not, therefore, believe in the eternal existence of evil. This is merely negation of belief, not assertion. It does not allow me to say, that I do believe in the restoration, or in the annihilation of the wicked, or in anything else, as an affirmative thought about them.* I simply do not know

* See Appendix A.

enough to have an opinion. I have no faculty to form an opinion. If I had such an opinion, it would compel me, in my own mind, to reconstruct all the morals and teachings of divinity by it: but I cannot do that, for I have no faith in any proposition, and only profound faith in the same ignorance of all theologians, philosophers, and demagogues, who would force us a hair-line beyond the words of Christ. In a happier state of mind, possibly than the poet, but yet proud to imitate him in this matter, I am willing to fall

> "Upon the world's great altar stairs
> That slope through darkness up to God,
> And stretch lame hands of faith and grope."

VI. I do believe practically and as a necessity, in all that lies in the word Gehenna, used on four occasions, by the Incarnate Love of God. It is the assertion of the one great law, after which we are groping now, of the survival of the fittest, the dissolution of all evil and abortion, the perishing of all failures and reprobates; the final triumph of all good. I am willing to see the scenery of Sinai gather around that valley of Tsal-Maveth or death-shade; to stand with Elias, and hear the thunder-storms roll over it; to feel the hot samiel wind as it sweeps scorchingly by from the southern desert; to find the air grow thick with ghosts from Sodom,

and troops of bat-winged demons from Persia, led by the evil god Ahriman, and to see that "Archangel in ruins," who once did sit upon a throne, "that far outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind," with all his peers: and the two living monsters Death and Hell led thither in chains. They gather at the mouth of the bottomless pit, which the superior imagination of Milton has made with ever still another deep. They stand by a lake of fire, that tells of a worn-out world in flames. They perish with it.

What is beyond, I am not commissioned to tell. I have seen the everlasting fires of Sodom go out, and the sunshine over Bahr Lût is as bright as before. I hear Moses behind the clouds, telling us that all there is goodness and mercy. I hear now only that 'still, small voice,' which came after the earthquake and the storm, and awed the prophet's soul as he rolled his sorrows upon God.

Are you dissatisfied at this oft-repeated confession of my ignorance? This, in my judgment, is *the half-shadow of Scripture*, and here we may safely declare that faith ends in thick darkness. My commission is, as I think St. Peter saw his to be, to teach the Gospel on its positive side. The justice of God is now pure and perfect, and beyond our grasp. The length, and breadth, and

depth, and height of his love now pass our knowledge. The judgments of the last day will be thorough and final and perfect, as all else is with him; and the scenery is designedly full of warning. Let our work be, so to live that we may have the light of God in our hearts, and escape the disease of horrors, which always gathers around the thought of evil. Thus we may learn to trust our loved ones to the bosom of the Infinite Father, and wait, till in his Light we can see light.

APPENDIX A.

WE are so habituated, in matters of divinity, to take oft-repeated *probabilities* as settled axioms, and thereupon to reason on them, as if every element of doubt had been eliminated, and the merely *probable* changed into the absolutely *known*, that most persons often find themselves asking questions which really allow no satisfactory answers, as matters of pure intellect. The answers can be only of the nature of the premises—a probability, more or less conjectural. They must lie in half-shadow. They are matters of feeling rather than knowledge.

Thus I am obliged to consider the questions which here start up and somewhat imperiously demand an answer as if the asking them were itself a satisfactory condemnation of my statements:

I. Are sinners, at the Day of Judgment, annihilated, or are they restored to the life of the good?

II. Are not the two sides of the sentence of that day co-equal as to duration—eternal life and eternal death—by the very language, and in the nature of things?

I reply, I. The whole subject of *the last things* belongs to *faith*, and not to knowledge. No one can reason on them finally, unless he sees and knows the whole field of vision. No words can convey the whole field of vision to us. God only can know all that belongs to it. By faith we can know, after a sort, the things which demand solution from our side of it, namely, the end of opposition

to God, the punishment of rebellion, and the destruction of evil.

It is very hard for the religious dogmatists of our times to comprehend the state of mind which resolutely *refuses to have any opinion* where one has no sort of knowledge. We have no sort of knowledge of any eternal fire, either material or immaterial, which depends for its element of eternity on the supersensual facts which the common theory considers as the axioms of its fearful science. The world in which we are living confounds us now in many things, but we must think of it, and we think according to the laws which it imposes on us. That the nature of fire now is to burn up, and that it is used in the Scripture in its natural sense, are convictions which both nature and mercy incline us to accept. What it may possibly symbolize beyond the natural kingdom, in other worlds, where eye and ear and "heart of man" have no possible knowledge, as I look at the Bible, no one can determine. Any theory which offers to tell us can only be a probability at the last, as it begins with such conjectural material at the start. The real question is, what theory has most of probability, as the true interpretation of the words of Christ, that we are in doubt about. Persian dualism with its evil god, classic mythology with its Homeric Tartarus, and the science, falsely so called, of the first centuries, would seem to give one theory the highest degree of probable authority. But the dualism has ceased to command attention; the dreams of the Greek and Latin poets are rejected as the diseased fancies of terror; and science has destroyed every inclination to accept that theory now. The probability is quite on the other side. I hold it still as probability on either side, and refuse to have

an opinion. If I am right in limiting the objects of revelation to the "end," when God "shall be all in all," then, as is said in the body of the discourse, it is an intrusion of philosophy into subjects unrevealed, to dogmatize on these questions.

My objection to any further expression of opinion about the annihilation or restoration of the lost is among others, this: that it reflexively demands a reconstruction of theosophy and ethics. If a relentless logic would attempt to force one on either proposition, in order to escape the idea of a cruel vengeance in the Divine Heart, which requires the absolute everlastingness and endlessness of evil in its most hateful form, that is, the eternal suffering, and hell-torments of those who can no longer resist, nor be allowed to cease being the one blot of nature; then I take deliberately the position, that the real dilemma is, the Augustinian decree or *madness*, and I hold the latter side to be preferable.

II. As to the other proposition, which to judge by the confident manner of its announcement by the unthinking, seems to be settled in their minds by its mere statement—that, if the Life is eternal, the Death must be eternal, and if the Death is in any way limited, the Life is necessarily limited—suppose for a moment that we accept it. We allow it to be so. What then? Are the righteous robbed of anything which they can claim as their own by right? Or to call in that sublimer thought, which tells us that Christ left the abodes of bliss, and shrunk himself into the form of a servant (Phil. ii.), and, then that the Man who "knew no sin" was willing to become "a curse" for us: the thought which ennobled Moses in his day, who prayed to Jehovah, "if not—then blot me out of thy book:" which

thrilled as a ruling power of life in St. Paul, willing to be "accursed for his brethren according to the flesh;" the thought which has infused into all true hearts a profounder conviction of the majesty of goodness, and is lifting us as a race and as individuals nearer heaven; would it be inconsistent with that thought, if we should grant the proposition, and rejoice to lose all, if thereby others could be saved from infinite, endless torments? Put the question to a Christian wife or mother: would you be willing to submit to a lingering death of great and prolonged suffering now, if thereby a husband or a son could be rescued from final condemnation? and her answer would be like that of Moses, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sins: and if not—blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."* Shall then a Christian woman be more merciful than her Creator, or more self-forgetful than her Saviour? If we are forced by the sublimer instincts of faith to this rule of judgment in this temporal life, what is there that makes it impracticable in the other, the far-off case? Is the thought of annihilation so dreadful? Then the surrender is the more sublime. We cannot doubt of this instinct, if we remember the strong words of St. Paul in the mature opinion of one of his later epistles (Rom. ix.), and the conviction of every true heart that he was never nearer heaven, than when he said it of his unbelieving, persecuting, and hateful brethren and kinsfolk.

But there is no need of accepting any such dilemma. Life and death are not intrinsically the same. Death is the negation of life. Literally eternal life is eternal being,

* Exod. xxxii. 32.

living and loving. Eternal death is a paradoxical and contradictory *eternal not-being*. In the purely imaginative (parabolic) words of Christ the two sides of that finality are presented scenically. The one side is life—a substantial thing—a condition of existence and duration, with capacity of perpetuity. It *is*. It endures of itself, until some limit is put to it. The other side is death, or *not-existing*, a negation of life and ending *in se-ipso*. "Rachel mourned for her children because they were *not*."

The scenery of the parable of Matt. xxv. 31–46, is highly imaginative, is poetic, symbolic, and representative, and must be so treated.

(*a*.) No one expects to find mankind rising as "sheep" and "goats," nor to see a shepherd-king seated upon a white throne. The scenery is arbitrary, and suggestive of what shall be in the final, inconceivable world, when at last every knee shall bow to Jesus, and every tongue shall confess him to be Lord.

(*b*.) The trial-tests are symbolical or representative, *i. e.*, are poetical, by that old system of poetry in pictured words which began on the shores of the Nile, and had been adopted by every prophet of Israel. They appeal to the imagination through the senses, and must be accepted and interpreted by the heart. No one expects to hear the entire history of a world, and of every man, woman, and child in it; yea, and of infants who have never visited the sick or seen the inside of a prison; of idiots and madmen, who have shared no touches of a responsible conscience of mercy, judged by that rule, and consigned dramatically to one side or the other in two terse sentences of judgment. St. John had no hesitation in expanding this language

of Christ into a royal session, with "the judgment set," the books opened, and men judged by the things which were written in them. They were three—the Book of the Law, the Book of Remembrance, and the Census of the Holy City. He sees the trial proceed in due order, and treats this vision and parable as poetic.

(c.) The Sentences must be accepted as a part of this parabolic teaching: that is, as suggestive. We look on the picture and we *muse* on *its meaning*. When the righteous are called to inherit a kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world, we *dream* of "a Better Visit" of ineffable glory, of permanent, enduring reality. Catholic divinity refuses to map off the exact lines of it, or put in a plea for an irreversible fee-simple claim in that city, whose length, and breadth, and height are equal. When the wicked are called the "cursed" (Κατηραμένοι, the devoted, a word which was brought in from Deut. xxi. 23, of bodies hanged on a tree), and sent away into "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," it is still *poetic*. As we must depart from all prose laws of speech and science, to make the fire *immaterial* and capable of burning spirits; to wit, the devil and his angels; so we may surely refuse to transfer the "everlasting" from the *fire* to the *goats*. St. John, as I regard it, has paraphrased it "This is the *Second Death;*" and death is not life; death is *not-being*.

(*d.*) The words which follow, namely, "everlasting *punishment*," Κόλασιν αἰώνιον, at first seem to imply a perpetuity of the discipline. The imagination can hardly conceive of an "ageless pruning, or an endless mutilation." The idea of punishment comes in secondarily, and carries with it the sense of discipline to *reform*

the subject. We give these words the force of the others which preceded, and stop with the fact that the αἰώνιον is said of the fire and not of the subjects. For the argument on which we are employed just here, it is enough to insist that the coequality of the two fates does not depend on the use of the one word *eternal*, but on the intrinsic nature of two conditions, considered in themselves. Life may be eternal. But death, if anything is meant by the word, that we now can conceive from things which are now known to us, is not *in se* capable of duration. It will require a transubstantiation, or metamorphosis of qualities, to become so.

And, after all, what is eternal life? Christ once defined it, and here is his definition: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John, xvii. 3.) I am accustomed to think of this as having no necessary connection with our ideas of time. It begins now in this present life, before the judgment, and is intrinsically independent of it. Its duration cannot depend upon the rhetorical accident of coming for once into contrast with its opposite.

After all that is said upon the philosophy of these thinkings and reasonings of the mind here in this dark and baffling world, I am willing to stop and make a stand on the utter refusal, which I have made again and again, *to have any theory*. One thing is a solemn duty —to use all diligence to be on the right hand of the Judge—to believe that I shall *love* Christ then, and see him to be "the Just One," the same as now—to account the long-suffering of God my or any one's salvation, and to preach the Gospel of Love as the motive to repentance now. The Rock of Ages is under foot now.

The night is black-dark around, that marks to me the limits of religious thought. Let who will peer over the edge of the precipice, and terrify himself and others with old pagan phantoms which have passed current as orthodox, long after the original fancies under them have perished. I do not in my heart feel afraid of their terror. I believe that the God of Nature is also the God of the Bible, and that he is revealed in both books, and not wholly in either. I am willing to be a fool in things which transcend the intellect, and twice a fool in dogmas that defy all known laws of God's great creation and just government. Let any man show me in all the realms of nature what thing God ever made and kept in unwilling being, simply to gratify himself in its anguish, and I will begin to regard his reasoning —and become less a Christian as I do so. Let any one show me how that which in man is simply detestable and horrible, can become lovely and desirable in the Creator, and I will look to our insane asylums to find which of them is to be preferred as his true Church. I will stand still and wait, where I am now, satisfied in the maxim—*scire quod nescias.*

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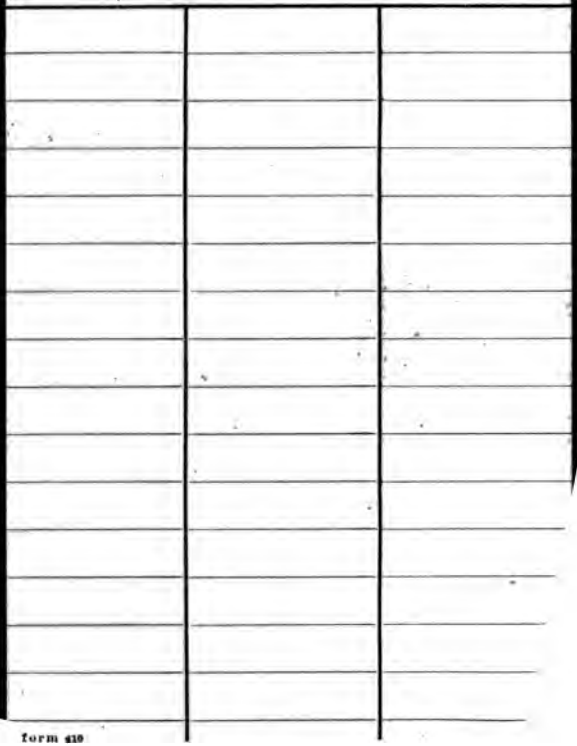

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